Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/sinsofsociety0000unse

THE SINS OF SOCIETY

Soul of our souls! and Safeguard of the world!
Sustain, Thou only canst, the sick of heart;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto Thee and Thine!

WORDSWORTH, *The Excursion*, Bk. IV.

THE SINS OF SOCIETY

Words Spoken by

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

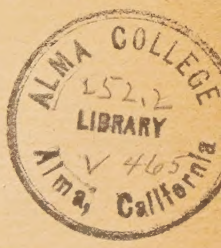
in the Church of the

Immaculate Conception, Mayfair

during the Season

1906

Property of
CLgA
Please return to
Graduate Theological
Union Library



FOURTEENTH EDITION

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.
DRYDEN HOUSE, GERRARD STREET, W.
1909

32852

NIHIL OBSTAT

CAROLUS S. GALTON, S.J.

CENSOR DEPUTATUS

IMPRIMI POTEST

✠ GULIELMUS

EPISCOPUS ARINDELENSIS

VICARIUS GENERALIS

WESTMONASTERII

die 13 *Oct.* 1906

TO YOU MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

WHO, RIGHTEOUS LIKE THE PHARISEE,

RIOTOUS LIKE THE PRODIGAL, COVETOUS LIKE DIVES,

VOLUPTUOUS LIKE THE TETRARCH, FRIVOLOUS LIKE SALOME,

SENSUOUS LIKE THE MAGDALEN, OR VICIOUS LIKE HERODIAS,

ARE WEARYING YOURSELVES IN THE WAYS OF INIQUITY,

SEEKING FOR PEACE

WHERE NO PEACE IS TO BE FOUND,

AND FOR REST WHERE THERE IS NO REST,

THESE WORDS ARE SPOKEN

BY ONE WHO KNOWS THAT THE HUMAN HEART

IS RESTLESS TILL IT RESTS IN HIM WHO IS

STILL CRYING OUT TO THE WORLD

"COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST"

"He that loveth gold, shall not be justified: and he that followeth after corruption, shall be filled with it. Many have been brought to fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin. Gold is a stumbling block to them that sacrifice to it; wo to them that eagerly follow after it, and every fool shall perish by it. . . .

"Blessed is the rich man that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him? He that could have transgressed and hath not transgressed: and could do evil things and hath not done them."

ECCLUS. XXXI.

PREFACE

THESE sermons, preached at Farm Street, Mayfair, during the past season, were not originally intended for publication. If they are now being printed, it is not because I have come to think they are worth reading, but because the public has expressed the wish to read them. This being the case, the responsibility of their publication rests not so much with me as with my many correspondents, who, if after having perused this little volume they regret the request they made, will have themselves chiefly to blame.

Here I may venture to state, for the sake of those who were not present when I preached this course, that as it was delivered without manuscript or note, I cannot now pretend to reproduce with accuracy all that I then

said, though I do think I have given, if not the detail, at any rate the substance of it.

Nobody will, I hope, conclude from the fact that the sermons were not written before delivery that I do not believe in writing sermons. On the contrary, when a man has leisure to write at his best, he should make a point of using the opportunity; in fact, I do not hesitate to say he should always have some writing on hand, lest he might easily yield to the temptation not to write at all. However, when a preacher is called upon to give a definite course, with little time for preparation, let him employ it not in writing, but in thinking.

Among many foolish questions that have been put me about this course of sermons perhaps the most foolish, as well as the most frequent, is, "Do tell me, have they been a great success?" Now, if the speaker does not happen to be a silly man, eaten up with vanity, he will recognise that there is only one thing that he can rightly know about

his sermons, and it is this, that their real success depends entirely upon his union with God. Indeed, if at one time more than another there is brought home to a preacher the meaning of the words "Without Me you can do nothing," it is when he stands as God's representative—before the congregation—a sinner denouncing the sins of sinners.

Who, then, out of Heaven, let me ask, can tell the results of his labours in the pulpit? Thank God, that is a secret which He keeps altogether to Himself. It is a matter about which we can know nothing till God reveals it to us, on the day of reckoning.

Certainly we cannot hope to gauge success by the crowded congregations that a preacher may happen to attract and to hold, for if his ambition be to draw them to himself only and not to pass them on to God, what, after all, is he but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? Neither can we measure success by the number of sinners said to be brought back by the fervent eloquence of the preacher's oratory, because these

conversions quite possibly, nay, most probably, may be due, under God's blessing, not to the rounded periods, nor to the would-be splendid declamation displayed in the pulpit, but, on the contrary, to the humble prayer of some poor woman telling her beads before an old plaster statue hidden away in a corner of the church.

Unless, then, the sower of the seed wants to be robbed of the fruit of his labours, he had better find out where success resides, and lie closely in the hollow of God's Hand, like the ointment of clay and spittle, of which, the Gospel tells us, our dear Lord made use when He gave sight to the man born blind. But even should the preacher feel conscious that he tries to do his best always, and everywhere, to please His Lord and Master, and to live on terms of closest intimacy with Him, he will nevertheless still be confronted with the difficulty of not knowing what subject to take and what line of thought to choose for the theme of a discourse.

Truth to tell, the Gospel story is so full of matter to talk about that a Catholic priest may well feel puzzled what God wants him to do. Take, for instance, what I may call the gallery of living pictures that has been left us by the Great Artist Himself. Each one of these is in itself a masterpiece, so teeming with life and instruction that you hardly want to pass from the first one that has caught your eye to the next, and yet, may it not be that the latter is even better suited to the circumstances of the time and place in which the sermon is to be preached than the one that first of all arrested and riveted so closely your attention?

And now, if I am to answer the question that has so often been put to me, as to why I chose the particular series of pictures which makes up the set to be found in this volume, I may say, after having given the matter careful thought, it seemed to me that, taking into consideration the season of the year, the conditions of my hearers, and

the atmosphere of their lives, there was nothing better, or so good, for me to do. In the first place I wanted, in a most distracting and disquieting hour of my hearers' lives, to awaken their attention, and to compel them to see what their lives actually were, compared with what they ought to be, and then I wished to try to persuade them to come back from their false selves to their true selves, and to offer themselves once again to the true God, against whom they had sinned.

Of course, as was natural, my choice was found fault with, some of my critics being good enough to inform me that the sermons were far too sensational and much too emotional. But then I wanted them to appeal through the senses to the emotions. In fact, it was just because I thought this particular set of word-paintings, drawn by our Lord, would create a startling sensation in those very persons whom I wanted to startle, that I selected them, and none others. To be quite candid, I felt that, until I had got hold of those con-

stituent elements in a man's being that go by the names of feelings, of senses, and of emotions, I could not even hope, especially in the height of the season, to make any spiritual change in his godless life.

Are not most men drawn away from God by the senses? If this is so, why am I not to try and bring them back again through the senses? Is the devil to have it all his own way? Not a bit of it.

To my thinking, one of the reasons why sermons preached to worldly people so often fail to change their lives is because the discourses in question partake far too much of the character of academical lectures, intellectual essays, or dogmatic discussions. Not that I undervalue for special occasions these learned outputs of the well-equipped mind, but I do think, when our mission is to influence the heart and move the will, rather than to fill the mind with abstract thought, that we had better supply such mental foodstuff only as may be readily converted into fuel with

which to set the heart on fire—"I came," says our Lord, "to cast fire."

Religion not being a theory, not even a practice only, but a life, and for the Christian a life of love and loyalty to Jesus Christ, the preacher, if he is to fulfil his mission, must, by some means or other, get at the hearts of his listeners, and fill them with divine love. Man is not what he thinks, nor what he says, no, not even what he does, but what he loves; and until he begins to love Jesus Christ, whatever else he may happen to be, he is not a Christian according to the Heart of the Master, whose preaching may be brought under the two texts, "Love Me," and "Abide in My love."

I cannot pretend to take notice of those persons who have written to the press, declaring that what I have said about the deplorable conduct of fast Society is an exaggeration, and that, in their opinion, it is not true, for the simple reason that I am not concerned with what they do not, but only with what I do, know. I thank God they

are ignorant of what I am most assured; —for them ignorance is bliss. Unfortunately I have a mass of evidence, and a host of witnesses endorsing every word I have said, and giving further instances in support of it. Had I made the sweeping assertion that the whole social organism was rotten to the core, the charge against me would then indeed have been justified; but, as it happens, I confined my denunciations to that particular section of the community, the "vulgar rich," who haunt the neighbourhood of Mayfair. Not that I think they are the only offenders, but they are among the worst, and with the least excuse.

To those who try to persuade themselves that I am puritanical in my views of life, I should like to say that I know far too much of the making of England not to recognise the place which national sports hold. They are a valuable asset in a nation's life. Games and pastimes of all sorts put grit and fibre into our race, and make us hardy men.

In my zeal for the physical well-being

of my countrymen, upon which their morale so largely depends, I most strongly advocate everything that encourages and develops bravery, daring, enterprise, and manliness, as well as everything which makes for the self-discipline so characteristic of all who are born and bred on our sea-girt isle.

> "What are toils to men who scorn them,
> Perils to men who dare?"

And let me add, in answer to those who have unconsciously misrepresented me in the press, that I do not think England owns a son who believes more in the healthy influence of a cheery, bright, and merry social life than I do; nay, so much do I believe in it that I consider it to be the duty of every one to contribute his share to the joyfulness, but not to the sinfulness, of any house-party where he may happen to be a guest. "God," we are told, "loveth the cheerful giver."

But what I do and must condemn is the action of those "who love vanity and seek after lying"; who want to convert life into a long laugh; who declare

that nothing can be wrong that they think right; that there is no sin except that of being dull or poor; that money must be had at any cost; that cards without high stakes are not worth playing; that intimacy of all sorts between the sexes is only "being human"; that if there be a God at all, He can only want you to be happy in your own way; and that the only way to be happy is to say what you like, do what you like, and when, and where, and with whom you like. These soul-destroying fiends in our midst, if I could, I would hold, as we do our other wild beasts, behind iron bars, in cages, apart from one another. Alas! it cannot be done.

The following sermons are meant amongst others for the advocates of these pernicious practices. These may be but few in number, but they are noisy, and their voices prevail. They batten on garbage, on putrid novels which for the most part are imported for their use and benefit into this country from the Continent. I have

before me catalogues of books the very titles of which are enough to send a thrill of horror and of terror through any man or woman who is normal. But, alas! these books by thousands are devoured in the boudoir even more than in the smoking-room; yes, devoured by beautiful women, of whom you would feel disposed to say with the poet:

> "They have but fed on the roses, and lain in the lilies of life."

We talk of the gutter press, but it is cleanness itself beside the sewage literature in which only too many of the present generation disport themselves and wallow swinelike.

When you protest against such reading, they answer that they are old enough to take care of themselves, and that they can see no harm in hearing both sides of a case. Does poison, then, cease to act when we have attained to the years of discretion? Do slime and filth leave no stain when once we have come to the use of reason? Only listen to the conversation of these would-be innocent persons

and form your own conclusion. "O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things," asks our Divine Master, "whereas you are evil? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The conversations that are carried on between the sexes and among women with each other are nothing less than shocking. It all goes to prove that in reading, as in everything else, these persons exercise no restraint whatsoever. They let themselves go, sending the drainage of the sewer into the very springs of life, till mind and heart are choked with what is both fleshly and filthy.

"A good man," says our Lord, "out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." How can it be otherwise?

Would that this bad literature, with this worse conversation, were the only evils of which there is too much reason to complain. But there are grosser practices than foul reading and filthy conversation.

Who can find words to express one's indignation with parents who for their own selfish ends rush their sons or daughters into loveless marriages, that can result in nothing but lifelong misery or else in legal separation?

Too well we all know the sort of Society woman who tries to persuade her daughter that unless she accepts the offer of marriage that has been arranged, not in view of her girl's happiness, but of her own convenience, she herself will be driven to commit self-slaughter. Nay, perhaps many of us could cite more than a solitary instance of a father who, for the sake of getting his gambling debts paid, has not hesitated to sell to some mammonite fiend an only child, who, rather than face her parent's anger, has closed with the hideous bargain, signed the contract and become a slave.

Of sons, too, who have been trapped and captured by designing women I could say much, but men I do not so much pity; they should be able to hold

their own. And yet how easily they too go under.

"However we brave it out, we men are a little breed."

In the following discourses I have taken occasion to point out some of the evil things that have risen up in our midst to-day, and in the Epilogue I have made bold to suggest some possible remedies, if only they will be taken up and given a fair trial.

What I rely on more than anything else is prayer. I earnestly exhort every reader of these sermons to remember "our help is in the Name of the Lord," and to cry out to the Lord to "make haste to help us." There is no substitute for prayer. It is hard work and at times distasteful enough; but let us keep at it, bearing in mind the words, "being in an agony, He prayed the longer." Let us be of good heart during the struggle, knowing the Angel of Comfort will at length be sent from the throne of grace to bless our efforts; and then we shall be strong to go forth both to do and to bear all trials for Christ's

dear sake. It is Christ whom we need.

Our Lord and none other can bring about our own conversion and the reformation of Society. Oh! why have we not, each one of us, long since made much more of Him? "Too late have I known Thee, Thou ancient Truth; too late have I loved Thee, Thou supreme Beauty," "Thou God of my heart."

Thou, Thou, my Jesu on the tree
With outspread arms embracest me,
For me didst feel the nails, the spear,
For me didst suffer shame and fear,
And pains and torments manifold;
A sweat of blood, with grief untold,
Nay death itself, and all for me,
A sinner vile as vile can be.
Why then, sweet Jesu, love not Thee
Who lovest me so tenderly?
Not that I may Thy glory see,
Nor Hell's eternal tortures flee,
Nor any way rewarded be,
But only as Thou hast loved me.
So love I *now* and *will* love Thee
Only because Thou art my King,
And Thou the Lord of everything.

114 MOUNT STREET, W.
Feast of St. Edward the Confessor,
1906.

THE FATHER AND HIS PRODIGAL SON

PARABLE

S. LUKE, XV, 11–32

THE FATHER AND HIS PRODIGAL SON

A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish

with hunger? I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up, he came to his father. And when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing: and he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him: Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father therefore

coming out began to entreat him. And he answering, said to his father : Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him : Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again ; he was lost, and is found.

THE FATHER AND HIS PRODIGAL SON

WHAT, let me ask you, was the matter with the younger of the two brothers referred to in the parable before us, that he should be so discontented with home, being anxious to get away from it? From what we learn in the story about it, and from what the Prodigal himself in his saner mood tells us, I am disposed to think it might have served as a model home. Perhaps that was precisely its fault in the eyes of the younger son; there was too much method and order, too much routine in the house to please him. His father was too old-fashioned, and bored him to extinction, while his elder brother was too exacting and got on his nerves; in a word, home life was, to his liking, too slow and dull, and he resolved to leave it and to try life elsewhere.

What in the name of Heaven, asked

the boy, are we sent into this world for, if we cannot do as we like? Surely life is none too long for one good spin without a check: why, then, should one be pulled up and called to order without rhyme or reason? Truth to tell, the Prodigal, like a restive colt, chafed and kicked under the pressure of home discipline, and so he made up his mind, come what might, to shake himself free from the yoke and go the pace his own way.

I have sometimes been asked why the father yielded to the boy's request, gave him money, and let him go. Well, you see there is no good purpose served in keeping a son at home, a nuisance to himself and to everyone else about the place, when once he has made up his mind to get away, go ahead, and see what he is pleased to call life. No doubt this is what the father felt, and so, having made his protest, he reluctantly let him go.

The day on which this younger son went away, taking with him all his goods and chattels, was a sad one for the household, because, though he was wild and giddy, no one could help loving his tearing spirits; besides, he

was so good-natured, having a kind word for every servant and retainer both in and out of the house. No doubt with the memory of him was long associated many a story of the help he had secretly given to poor people in the neighbourhood. "God bless him," they said, "and bring him to us safely back again."

And now, having turned his back upon home, with the world before him, whither did he go? This we are not told, but it is said: "He went abroad into a far country"; in other words, he got right away so as to have no chance of meeting anyone he had known before.

Someone may here ask me: what made the boy so different from his elder brother? Partly, perhaps, it was temperament, but most probably the teaching of some bad companion, or it may be the example of some servant had a bad influence on him, spoilt him, making him discontented and restless.

It is likely enough that before nightfall of the first day away from home the Prodigal began to feel very sorry for himself, and almost wished he were back again; but the feeling had gone

by morning; and, refreshed with sleep, he rose up, enchanted with the prospect of seeing real life and revelling in it. Whatever city it was where he first stayed, it was far enough away to make him feel sure that, no matter to what lengths he might presently choose to go, there would be no possible chance of his mother getting to know anything of it, and that was all he cared about.

When a man is young and is thought to be rich, there is not much difficulty in getting on and making acquaintances; he is pretty sure to be in request, and with a golden key in his hand there is not a door but will readily swing open before him. What a tingling, novel sensation for this lad in his teens it was to find himself in surroundings where, instead of being thwarted and blamed, he is flattered and praised; in place of being pulled up, he is pushed on, being told that he is "all right," and not—what he had so often heard —"all wrong." There are always to be found those who teach that it cannot be wrong to do what you like, provided you can pay for it.

Standing on the threshold of life, with the social world opening out vista

after vista of bewitching loveliness, youth feels itself at the gates of some enchanted fairyland, and the temptation to spring forward and plunge into it, to get involved in it, and become part of it, is almost irresistible. Perhaps no one experiences this more forcibly than a young man at the time when God is inviting him to sacrifice it all for virtue's sake. Then it is, when he resolves to renounce the world, that his so-called friends rally round, begging of him not to be such a coward as to run away from what clearly is his duty, while all the time he himself is painfully conscious that he needs every bit of pluck he can muster to remain loyal to God who calls him. They go on to remind him of all the good he might do by staying where he is, but his conscience assures him there is nothing better he can do than go where God, his Master, bids him. What a terrific struggle it all is he only knows who has been through it. To be told one is simply selfish when one wants only to be generous; to meet with nothing but coldness and cynicism when most of all there is an agonising cry in the soul for kindness and sympathy, is hard indeed for flesh

and blood, in the full tide of its passion and strength, to bear even for God.

But our Divine Lord always comes to the rescue of His servants at the critical moment, and then the would-be novice clearly sees that if ever he is to become of real service to his fellows, he can only be so by lying more closely in the hollow of God's Hand; that he can, as a matter of fact, only put into others what he takes out of himself; and that out of his own heart there is nothing worth drawing for others till God Himself has filled it with His Grace and with His Love.

When once all this becomes clear as noonday to one called to serve God in religion, then at last the aspirant to religious life may tear himself away from what to him looks the loveliest home on earth, to fling himself at the feet of his Maker, there to offer himself unconditionally to God, in order to be moulded, like clay in the hands of the potter, into a vessel of election for the glory of his Maker and the good of his country. The glare flung upon the toys and gew-gaws of this world is dazzling till "within the liquid ether the eye of God shines through."

But when Thy keener, purer beam
Is poured upon his sight
It loses all its power to charm,
And what was day is night.

Renunciation of the world may be truest bravest patriotism, but "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given," for, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." When God puts the question, "If thou wilt be perfect?" it means He is prepared to supply the Grace needed for its attainment.

What an enlightening Grace is that which enables a man to realise that compared with what is in store for him in the future, the present world is no more than a little rosebud tossed by the idle wind from a wilderness of roses; nay, that it is less than a dewdrop on the rose-leaf itself, when measured by that ocean of eternity into which "the loyal unto death" shall presently plunge and disport himself, fearless of wreckage for evermore. The world assures us: "It is roses, roses all the way," but he that has travelled the road knows it is briars, briars most of the way.

But to return to the Prodigal. He discovered, to his cost, that the gay

world of fashion was to him practically quite irresistible. He soon found himself sucked into it, and he let himself go. Our Lord's words about his career at this stage on the down-grade are terse, pregnant, and graphic. He says the unfortunate boy "wasted his substance living riotously." Was there ever such word-painting, was ever the story of a life of plunge, of havoc, and of ruin so completely told in four words?

What is a life of sin if not a life of waste; while the life of waste usually, what else is it but a life of riot? In fact, what is sin but iniquity, lawlessness—in other words, a riot? "All sin," says St John, "is iniquity." What a madness it is! How the Lord who knows us best recognises this, and hence His excuse for sinners is, "They know not what they do."

But let us follow this eager young man, for whom no one can help feeling a sort of affection. I, for one, can never read a chapter in his life without longing to dash after him, imploring him to remember that the great social world is after all really nothing but a terrible transformation scene; that the

glamour and glitter glinting on its many phases of life is not lasting; that the enticing promises and bribes it offers to the gay and giddy passer-by are less worthy of a man's acceptance than the ephemeral pantomime is worthy the acceptance of a child. The world of which I am speaking is the embodiment of a lie; its principle of action is expediency; its measure of rightness is success; while its promises are made, as sooner or later we all learn, only to be broken. It is the cruellest and most cowardly thing upon God's earth; it will open wide its arms, welcoming to its bosom any darling of fortune; it will drain him dry as hay, and when it has wrung the last glittering coin from his hand, it will drop him, as a stone is dropped in a pond, and forthwith forget he ever existed.

Who would not save a friend from the arms of a Siren such as this; who would not cry at the top of his voice warning him against her bewitching fascinations?

Lest it should be said this thought about the social world is the very coinage of my brain, and that it has no existence apart from it, let me ask you to

fix once more your eyes upon our friend, the Prodigal, as he mounts the gilded chariot of pleasure and flings the reins of duty upon the flanks of the steeds of passion, while, reckless of consequences, he gallops down the broad road leading to the mouth of hell. Who is there to stop him? Who to warn him? Nay, who cares what becomes of him? Does the world care? Its own life is one of wasted opportunities, of wasted talents, of wasted thought, of wasted energy, of wasted love itself. And so was the Prodigal's. Observe, when our Lord says he "wasted his substance" —the substance of his soul as well as of his body—He implies not merely the want of use, but the mis-use, nay, the abuse itself, of all the God-given gifts that were put into his young hands for the fulfilment of a definite mission, for the attainment of a splendid destiny; in other words, for building up, not a poor, clumsy social ladder, the shortest way to the cliff ending in a precipice with a bottomless pit, but a noble staircase, sloping up to the Throne of God, where man, clad in light and beauty as a vesture, shall reign and rest in Truth, one with God for evermore.

The world, into which the Prodigal plunged, differed only in its surface show from the world in any other hour of its little day of life on this little planet. What did it do for the Prodigal? It taught him not merely to ignore God, to neglect his soul, to forget prayer and to laugh at sin, but it forced him also to accept those unwritten laws which regulate its restless life, to adopt the articles of its godless creed, and to proclaim the gospel of its emancipation from all tenets and duties that go to make a man. Remember with the poet—

> For man is not as God, but then
> Most god-like being most a man.

We acquire much from our actual environment, and the poor Prodigal soon began to feel all the sweet memories of his nursery days fading away, all the dear practices of his childhood just slipping off him; while in exchange for them, so it seemed to him, there were gathering about his person and clinging to him as a closely-fitting garment, sensations reeking with the poison of foul and loathsome sin; he felt almost as though he had been flung into some city sewer;

he could not help knowing, in spite of himself, that he was a changed man, that the whole tide of his life had another setting, the whole strength of his being a different goal. What had really happened? He had wasted all he had, as his brother afterwards complained, with harlots, who, to use the language of our Lord, had "devoured his substance." What a treacherous world was the Smart Set in which the Prodigal rioted!

Before he had been under its spell for many months it had actually torn out of his soul every token by which even his poor mother could have recognised him — his buoyant spirits, his merry laugh, his bright eyes, his healthy colour, his manly bearing, his elastic stride—all were gone. Alas! "The flower of youth and beauty's pride for ever gone!" Not only had the Prodigal bartered God for Mammon, Eternity for Time, Soul for Body, and Virtue for Vice, but he was at length driven by the reverses of fortune to change even harlots for swine, and the garbage of pleasure for the filth of the swill-tub. O how piteous is the word: "And he would fain have filled his

belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." The world only gives to get; where there is nothing to get, there it has nothing to give. He was starving and in chains:

> Yet round him hung invisibly a chain
> Which gall'd for ever, festering though unseen,
> And heavy though it clank'd not; worn with pain.

What ill luck, let me ask you, had befallen this exquisite young man for whom the best only had been good enough? He had run through his fortune. He had no money. What misfortune in the eyes of the world could compare with that? I do not know how much the Prodigal had when he first set out to see the world, but no matter what sum it may have been, there is no purse that will stand the strain of continuous rioting. The poor boy woke up one morning to find he was, as men say, "stone broke," nor did he see his way to borrowing or to pawning, for he had already parted with all he had that was worth a cent. "He had spent all," says our Divine Lord.

For the first time in his life the

spendthrift felt what it was to want a meal, to be without plenty waiting on appetite.

Pause for a moment, and reflect on the fuller significance of the word: "He began to be in want." Physical want is bad enough, and for one who never had allowed himself to want for anything his appetite might fancy, the pangs of physical hunger must have been a terribly novel experience. But what was the want of his starving body compared with the wants of his famished soul? If the cry of his body was for meat, was for drink, the want of his soul was rest, was sympathy, was peace; yes, peace with his conscience, peace, in a word, with God. He cried, "Peace, peace, and there was no peace." Alas! poor sinners, how intensely they are to be pitied. Not even the starving East-end labourer wanting work can know anything like the bitter pangs of the sinner's want. It is the want of God.

When a man begins seriously to reflect upon the possibilities of his being —so wonderfully, so fearfully made; when he pauses to think what others less lavishly dowered than himself have actually achieved; when he foresees,

ever so dimly, the account which at no great distance of time he may have to render of talents squandered and no treasure garnered, of time lost and eternity not gained—then, indeed, he begins to realise what it is "to be in want." Oh, what a poor, paltry, and petty bargain he makes who barters the next world for this, eternity for time, the everlasting for the never present! Why is he so blind?

> Man is blind because of sin;
> Revelation makes him sure.
> Without that, who looks within,
> Looks in vain, for all's obscure.

So long as the ball is kept tapped and is spinning, so long as the lights are blazing and the audience is applauding, the play is proceeding and life is progressing, this world to youth blinded by sin may seem to be the only one of which we can make sure; nay, the only one worth living for. But just as some star actor in the height of his first season's success will often return home from the theatre to fling himself on his bed in a flood of tears from a feeling of utter loneliness, though but a moment since he was surrounded by a crowd of

flattering worshippers, so the Prodigal, in the midst of all that was gay and brilliant, seemed to feel that the curtain was being rung down upon his life, and suddenly all was becoming cold and dark. Viewed from the dress circle, the play of life may look bewitchingly delightful, but when you are on the stage itself, and playing your part, you begin to see life with other eyes.

To the spoilt son of fortune it may seem worldly wise to take for a motto what only too frequently we hear from young men to-day—"A short life, but a merry one"; "Let us eat, drink, and make merry, for to-morrow we die." But before the merry life has been embraced, only too often there enters in the sorry one, and then the roses get withered, the lights extinguished, the body becomes diseased, and the soul within lies slaughtered.

If only every gilded youth, before starting on the quest of happiness, would accompany me to certain hospitals, I could show him sights that might haunt him both day and night, and hold him from his enterprise.

Alas! alas!—too soon from the lips that sang, "Let us crown ourselves with

roses before they are withered," comes the cry : " We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the ways of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us ? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ? " " We fools—we fools ! "

God is good and knows how to send blessings in disguise. The greatest blessing in the Prodigal's life of riot was the treatment he received from his own set when the rumour went round that he was a ruined man. For the first time since he had left home the Prodigal turned round to stare his old self in the face. Scarcely could he bring himself to believe all that had happened since the luckless day when he tore himself from the embrace of weeping relatives and friends to go forth and see what he called life. His past, as he looked back upon it, loomed up before him like a bad dream, and yet he could not help knowing it was all a dreadful reality. Never once since the fatal farewell had he been off the road to ruin, and now he was nearing the end of it. Fronting him now

were the gates of Hell, upon which his imagination might have read the warning: "All hope abandon ye that enter here." Alas! What nights of feverish restlessness, of conscious guiltiness, of remorse almost bordering on despair, did the poor stricken youth pass in that outhouse near the swine, the only companions now left him, as he thought, on earth. No doubt the thought of self-slaughter rushed in upon him, for what else, he asked himself, was left by which to drown his senses in forgetfulness and in sleep? He felt himself to be all alone in a lonely world in which was neither sun, nor grass, nor stream, nor tree, but only a desert, pathless land, and he longed just to tear himself to pieces if only to stop those fiend-like voices of Remorse and Despair that yelled their cry, "Too late, too late," into his soul both day and night. What a fool he had been to have allowed himself to be bewitched and mesmerised by nothing better than a mirage in an arid desert. The mirage had vanished, and now there lay before him nothing but the grey forbidding wilderness. He stood,

he reeled, and finally dropped to the ground, falling flat upon his face, while he sobbed and sobbed till he thought his very heart would break. He wondered to himself how men and women could be so cowardly, hard, and cruel as they had been to him—like panthers in the desert, like serpents under its stones, like vultures actually plucking out his eyes and heart before he was dead. Again and again he asked himself however it came to pass that he had not heeded his father, who had foreseen and foretold him all that actually had happened. Presently a feeling of peace, like a refreshing dew, seemed to fall upon him, when the vision of his father's house, and of all those servants whom he had known and loved in his childhood rose up before him, and came gathering anxiously and pressing most tenderly about him, till at length, struggling to his feet and wiping the cold sweat from his brow, he looked into the eye of day, asking, as he returned to himself, could he possibly pluck up courage to return home. "The hired servants in my father's house," so he argued, "abound with bread, while I here perish with hunger."

What would he not give to be back again, no matter what conditions his father might impose. But not till he had fought in prayer through many a struggle and misgiving did he come to formulate the resolve : " I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him : ' Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee ; I am not now worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants '."

Then began the journey homeward. What a long pilgrimage it was—every turn of the roadway bringing up visions of the past, every homestead recalling some scene of boyish happiness ; and as the land about became more familiar, it awakened memories in his soul that had slumbered and never awakened since that day of evil departure. You may well imagine how to this poor Prodigal his native air seemed sweeter and its sun warmer, its meadows greener, and its trees lovelier than anything he had come across since he left them too long ago.

Time will not permit me to describe at length the welcome that awaited the lost boy when at length he did reach his dear, dear home. But oh, the beauty

of it, the mercy of it, and the comfort of it! See the father, worn and grey with anxiety and waiting for his son's return. There he stands—or rather there he goes forth, running fast to meet his Prodigal Son, and to fold him in the embrace of fondest love—while the boy, all broken with contrition, only pleads for mercy and forgiveness. Oh, observe well the touch of pathos, the note of grace, the line of beauty introduced here into this picture by our Divine Lord. He assures us that so enchanted is the father with his son's return, so delighted is he to see him and have him back again, that altogether heedless of the cruel and criminal ingratitude of the past, he can do nothing but hold the boy locked in his arms, while he keeps exclaiming again and again to all his friends that gather round: "My son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found." You know the rest, and you know the lesson of God's mercy which this parable is meant to convey, just as you know the lesson in God's justice which the parable of Dives and Lazarus is intended to teach.

How marvellously suited to our own

day is this parable of the Prodigal. Do you not recognise him, have you not repeatedly met him in Mayfair or Belgravia ? I myself know many a young man resembling so accurately the portrait painted by the Great Master, that one can scarcely realise that the Prodigal spoken of in the Gospel is not somewhere in Club-land to-day. A young man, with great expectations, has not in this day much chance of holding his own when set upon by women of Smart Society. They go for him, they pluck at him, and if they can they will seize hold of him, and, to borrow our Lord's expression, they will " devour his substance." Yes, and devour it ravenously, clamouring for their prey as the panther, the tigress, and the hyena clamour at feeding time in Regent's Park for the raw flesh tossed to them.

Smart and dainty ladies though they may be, once they have pledged themselves in the wine-cup of pleasure, to the " Mammon of iniquity," they are little better than savages, not less cruel and far more cunning. For woman is not as man ; given a man's code of morality or immorality as the case

may be, you can tell almost to a certainty how, under any set of given circumstances, he will act; whereas, no matter what may be a woman's ideas of morality, the only thing you can really be certain of is that you do not at all know what, under any circumstances, she will do. When once I ventured to make this statement to a smart woman, her only comment was: "And how could you know, when even we ourselves do not know?" Who has not, for example, heard a woman boast that no one ever came into her life whom she could not, at a moment's notice, toss out of it, forgetting in less than five minutes he had ever existed. This is a sort of feat man cannot accomplish; it is the monopoly of woman. He will tell you, if he speaks at all, that where once he has lodged a pure and good affection there it will remain, even if unrequited, till the close of his life. With many men, "love is love for evermore," while with only too many women it "flies like a bird from tree to tree." Such are the constituent elements of their being that with women change is easier to practise than constancy, contradiction

better to grow than character. A foolish man will think aloud, but a silly woman feels aloud. No doubt women will resent what I say, and will go on to assure me that no woman ever speaks without thinking. Perhaps this may explain why so many of them suffer from insomnia—speaking all day involving, of course, the necessity of thinking all night. Again, with rare exceptions, the woman whose heart is said to be broken with grief is not long in discovering the means of healing it, and she will usually refer to the trial as a thing of the past ; whereas with a man of any depth of character—

> Deep grief is not a past event.
> It is a life, a state
> Which habit makes more terrible
> And age more desolate.

If you ask him, how then does he come to bear it in such perfect resignation ? He will answer with the Cardinal Poet—

> But deeper in my heart than grief,
> Art Thou my Lord and God.

But of one thing any man who ventures into Smart Society may be sure, and that is if he goes into it with any money he will come out of it without any. Even I, in my limited

experience, know of men who have been kept at bridge, and forced, in spite of themselves, to play, and to play high, and to play long, and to play on till there was nothing more to play for. The men I refer to have been ruined with their wives and children by the mad gambling of these mad creatures.

People may say what they will, but this ruin over the card-table is not, as some of the daily papers say, dying out ; it is living on in full swing, and we all know it. It might be a blessing if some of these gambling harpies could be given what are called " Woman's Rights," for under these conditions, I presume, they would drop woman's privileges, and then man might have a chance of seeing that " they played the game."

But there is a worse crime than that of " rooking " young men, and that is of ruining at the gambling-table young women. What a hideous series of pictures I might put up for your gaze, depicting the fall and ruin of beautiful English girls over the card-table. Many, yes, I say advisedly, many a *débutante* has been drawn into this vortex, in some instances by the hostess herself, and has been sucked down before the

end of play to nearly the lowest degradation to which a woman can come. Or perhaps she may have risen from the table altogether innocent of what has happened, till informed, with the sweetest " good-night " that her losses at bridge have been so-and-so. Alas ! the family doctor and the family lawyer could tell you better than I can what number of their young clients have been brought to the verge of the grave through shameless anxieties, occasioned not by whist or by baccarat, but by bridge. With this curse upon a girl she is driven to desperation ; she must pay her debts ; where is she to turn for the money ? Does she go to her mother or her father ? No, in her shame she dares not ; so she flies, she scarce knows whither, till at length some devil in human form crosses her path, makes his bargain, and the money is hers ; the debt is paid. But oh ! the poor girl, she is so horrified with what has happened that she will tell you she can never be herself again.

I care not who may contradict me, I feel as certain as I am of my own existence that it is this cursed bridge which is like a mill-stone about Society's

neck, dragging it down into the depths of this sewer of loathsome filthiness. I have referred to girls who are ruined by bridge—what is there one could not say about married women!

This passion for gambling is not, I am sorry to say, confined to the Smart Set; it has spread like an infection—nay, like a plague—throughout the length and breadth of the land, and its virulent poison penetrates and permeates the social organism so completely that they are blessed indeed who happen to escape its almost miasmic influence. What a sight is that seen in the East-end streets when the newsboys whip about with the last edition of an evening paper giving the "latest" for the next race, or the winner's name of the last race—or announcing some score or some event upon which even the urchins have laid their money. And so the story goes through all the classes, and through all the seasons of the year, everyone eager for the excitement, but eager still more for the winnings of the race.

And here let me take this opportunity of answering publicly, briefly as I may, the many questions recently put

to me about the morality of gambling. A great deal at different times has been written about it—some sense, more cant. Some people, it would seem, allow their feelings to lead them to a conclusion, and then they cast about for a scientific basis, and damage their cause by putting forward propositions that ethically are untenable.

My dismay about the evil consequences of gambling is as actively intense as that of the typical Puritan, but I am not going to be carried away by feeling. I wish to ride straight on scientific principles to a logical conclusion. I do not wish to try and make out a greater number of Commandments than there actually are. There are none too few for most of us, as matters stand.

Let it then be clearly understood what gambling is. The idea of gambling embraces all contracts in which the parties do not know what they are giving and taking, and in which they cannot influence the result. What goes by the name of legitimate trade does not come under this description, for the parties know or assume that there will be no material fluctuations of value

before the transaction is completed; but as soon as you get forms of trade in which the parties distinctly contemplate fluctuations, they are, in fact, gambling, betting upon a rise or fall, and are backing the accuracy of their forecast as truly as if they backed a horse, a team, or a crew. Speculative trades of all kinds are forms of gambling, and must be judged by precisely the same rules as indulgence in bridge or *rouge-et-noir*. Of course the gambling element in trade grows more prominent as the fluctuations in value become more rapid, and so in this way horse-racing, card-playing, and pitch and toss have a worse name before the public than dealings in cotton futures, though we all know that the whole thing is a process of gambling.

Pray let me make it clear that here I am dealing with the principle of gambling, and not with the particular mould into which it may be run. Having clearly before us what gambling is, I now want to remind you that all gambling, whether on the Stock Exchange, in the card-room, or on the race-course or elsewhere is attended with a certain pleasurable excitement, to which

some people are very much more sensible than others, but to which very few indeed, if any at all, are wholly insensible.

If you will study the question, you will see that this excitement is more or less independent of the amount of money lost or won. In fact, I have known instances of persons so swayed by this passion that they have not hesitated to gratify it when all the odds seemed to be against them. Of course it is distinctly more gratifying to win than to lose, but who can doubt that many a man has found an attraction in hazard, altogether independent of money ?

I know that some of my countrymen will tell me that there is no reason for this pleasurable excitement, but then there are always people who display ignorance of those elements that go to constitute the social being called man. I have no hesitation in making the statement that the gambling instinct in man does not admit of analysis ; it is one of those elementary facts of man's constitution like the perception of harmony, the love of scenery, and the like. And now perhaps I may be permitted to tell those persons who have written

in the Press to say I want to stop all elegance in dress, all dainties in food, and all pleasure in life, that I want to do nothing of the sort. I only want St Augustine's fine maxim to be observed: "Use temporal things with the moderation of an employer, not with the ardour of a lover."

I advocate elegance in dress, but not extravagance; I like delicacies in food, but not dainties only; I uphold pleasure in life, but not pleasure gone mad. We can no more live merely on pleasure than upon whipped cream, and people who spend their life trying to do nothing but pick pleasure out of it would be better employed picking oakum.

But now for the important question: may this taste for gambling be gratified? To this question I reply, the taste for gambling may be reasonably indulged in under the same conditions as govern other similar indulgences. For instance, one man has a taste for the opera or the drama, or for collecting engravings or curios, or what not, and we will presume his circumstances justify his spending a fixed sum a year on gratifying his tastes; another has a fancy for betting on the race-course or

in the card-room, and who, let me ask, holds the brief to convict him of sin for doing so, provided he is not paying to bookmakers or card-players more than he is justified in spending on his personal pleasures ?

But I have been told that it is very wrong to play for money. From the way in which some people speak of money one might almost imagine that there was some deity residing in it, that it was itself an object of worship and not merely of use ; an end in itself and not a means only to a mere proximate end. Such is the esteem and almost reverence that some have for gold, that I verily believe, if another golden calf were to be set up as an object of adoration, there would be gathered about it a congregation outnumbered only by the crowd of sight-seers on a cricket field, or a football ground, or a race-course, who, for the most part, are attracted thither not so much by their delight in play, as by their worship of gold.

It is not the fact of playing for money that is essentially wrong. If it were, then we should have to condemn all men in speculative trades, all persons on the

Stock Exchange, and all their dealings in stocks or cotton futures. This contention is ridiculous, and to my thinking displays a plentiful lack of English common sense. If betting on cotton need not be wrong, then betting on a horse may be right. All the conditions of a fair contract may be present in a bet ; each horse in the running has its market price, just as a bale of merchandise in any warehouse has. The man who stakes his money on the horse or the goods believes that they will rise in the market, and so he buys at the present price, intending to sell at a future time. He backs the accuracy of his forecast ; if he wins, the money is his.

The objection is put me that the gambler has given nothing for what he gets. Has he not exposed himself to the risk of losing while the other party is content to make the bargain ? To make this still clearer, let me take the case of some Nonconformist householder who pays a few shillings for fire insurance and happens the very next day to receive hundreds of pounds from the unfortunate company. He has backed his house to burn, and his fancy has won. He has the praise of

prudence, and no sane person accuses him of dishonestly taking money which he has not earned. Even the Nonconformist, with a Nonconformist conscience haunting him like a nightmare, would scarcely, under the circumstances, refuse the money, though he will try and find fault with my doctrine. The same may be said of the man who insures his life, who backs a horse, who plays at bridge, or who puts money on football or cricket, or a polo team.

But here, after elucidating the principle of gambling and of showing under what circumstances it may possibly not be wrong, permit me, with all the vehemence of my soul, to warn you against gambling.

"All things are lawful to me," says St Paul, "but all things are not expedient." And first of all, the evil of gambling, as we all know, is to be found in the liability to abuse; in the almost magnetic hold it gets of a man, robbing him of mind, of heart, and of will-power, so that having once let loose this passion he may find it, if not at once, yet later on, very difficult to control. Once a man begins to spend more upon this pleasure than he can afford to spend on

it, he is indulging in vice ; he has slipped on an inclined plane, and he will find himself only too soon tobogganing helplessly down a steep leading to the precipice of ruin.

The safest and the best way for most of us to deal with the gambling instinct is to leave it severely alone, having nothing whatever to do with it ; all the more because a gambler can never tell into what temptation he may be leading others ; for remember, gambling is a bi-lateral contract, in which if one must win the other partner must lose.

Gambling in some form or other is clearly the vice of the day, and we must attack it, not hysterically, but rationally. If we really have at heart the welfare of our fellows and the well-being of our country ; if we are earnestly asking God's blessing upon ourselves and upon our Empire ; if we are in downright earnest, and are resolved to rise to a sense of our responsibilities as citizens and as Christians ; if, in a word, we mean to be real and thorough, daring to make the very best of ourselves, that we may become fitter instruments in God's hands for the edification and salvation of our neigh-

bour; then, I say, let us one and all resolve to tear out of our being, no matter what its cost to flesh and blood, that special evil thing, be it betting or be it avarice, be it sensuality, be it jealousy or backbiting, which is thwarting God's designs in our souls. Let each one with the poet ask himself—

Am I mad that I should cherish that which bears
but bitter fruit?
I will tear it from my bosom, though my heart
be at the root.

Observe, it is the "inordinate attachment" to these pursuits that I feel bound entirely to condemn, not so much the moderate indulgence in them. As an Englishman, I lament more than I can say the neglect, among other things, of fine manly sport so noticeable in the present day. I want to see my fellow-countrymen ride straight, and shoot straight, see straight and speak straight, for then a larger average might quite possibly act straight. I wish there were more good riders, good cricketers, good anglers, and good marksmen, for then there might be larger hope of a greater number of good Christians. But with the present-day

rush from the country into the town, the physique of our race is being lowered, while the taste for an active part in manly games is in consequence fast disappearing from our midst. Like the Romans in the hour of their decline, we too want to be spectators instead of performers. The other day I heard a great general remark that one of the explanations of the sobriety of the present-day youth was the fact that he had not the head to stand what his fellow in a past generation could have tossed off without a thought. Our rising generation lacks stamina and grit.

We assemble nowadays in our tens of thousands to hang about a football ground or a cricket field, smoking injurious cigarettes, while we follow with interest, not how the game is being played by rival teams, but how our stakes are swaying to and fro in the balance of averages.

Oh for the day when men shot over dogs, and walked across moors; when they waded the river and leapt mountain stream; when with a crust of bread and cheese for their food, and the running brook for their drink, they

forced their well-set limbs to do the bidding of their will, and went forth in the sweat of their brow to stalk or walk their game, big or small. Alas! we are living in a day "when none will sweat but for promotion." Surely the present-day luxurious ease is as injurious to our physical as it is to our moral well-being. No man, least of all an Englishman, is killed by hard work. We all need it to keep us clean and strong, sound and healthy in soul just as much as in body. Let me exhort you to take warning while yet you may from what we know of Rome in her day of decadence; but most of all let me implore of you not to make haste to get rich by the fool's short cut to riches —gambling, which if for a season it may put gold in your purse, will take truth out of your mind, and will rob you of all that sweetens, softens, and sanctifies life.

For a moment pause and calculate if you can the hours of precious time wasted in gambling; yes, the time spent on it, the money tossed into it, the passions let loose upon it, the vices called forth by it, the quarrels springing out of it, the wealth that is lost

through it ; and then go on to consider the miseries it entails, the ruin it occasions, the hostilities it engenders, and the bad example it sets ; and after that tell me, am I wrong when I say that the gambler is a prodigal who "wastes his substance living riotously ?" If this is so—and I challenge anyone to deny it—then can I do less than implore you with all the force of my being to cease your riot before the end comes, before " the mighty famine " sets in, before you " begin to be in want," and all you have is gone ?

Do not, I beseech you, wait till you find yourselves in such straits that you would fain fill yourselves " with husks the swine do eat " ; no, but return to yourselves now when the opportunity offers, now while yet it is day and you have light to see and grace to do what is right. Arise, I say, and come home to your Father, striking your breast, confessing your sin against heaven and before Him.

Oh ! let no man or woman be heard to cry out, " Too late, too late." With God it is never too late, with life there is hope. Do you doubt me—ask Blessed Peter, ask the penitent thief ; nay, ask

the Prodigal himself, who was it that gave him back the first robe and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet ; who was it that forgave and forgot that life spent rioting in sin, wallowing in muddy pleasures, revelling in giddy practices, gambling with all he had and all he was ?

Come back, I say, like the Prodigal from the far-off country where you have wandered and squandered already too much ; come back like the lost one to your Father's house and home ; come back like him with sorrow and shame, and I promise you that you too shall know a Father's forgiveness, and you too shall feel a Father's embrace, and you too shall hear a Father's voice exclaiming : " Alas ! you were dead and are come to life again, were lost and are found."

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

PARABLE

S. LUKE, XVIII, 10-14

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week: I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner.

I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Of all conceivable occupations which may engage a man's time there is none to compare with that of prayer. Prayer is the greatest and grandest work to which man can devote his time and his energies. In it all the forces of his being are brought into action, and are concentrated on their very highest and holiest object of contemplation and of worship—Almighty God Himself. It is in prayer, when man finds himself alone with God, that his soul breaks forth into songs of praise and thanksgiving; or else into acts of humility and contrition, praying for pardon, imploring strength to meet the chequered circumstances that go to make up this complex thing called life. Prayer may be called man's audience-time with the King Eternal, Who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are

but dust: it is a time therefore, when we must be sincere and simple as a child. Whatever part a man may choose to play elsewhere, before God he can play none; he must be his own real self. For man to pretend then, to be what he is not, would be not only silly but sinful, being conscious that he is kneeling in the presence of One before Whom man is not what he happens to say he is, but what he really is.

Prayer, being so solemn and sacred a duty, I feel sure there is no one here present who could think it even possible for him to be anything but sincerely simple and straight when on his knees before his Maker and his Judge; and yet, in speaking on this subject, our Divine Lord Himself puts us on our guard, warning us not to be proud but humble, not unreal but real, not false but true to ourselves when saying our prayers. And, in order to bring home to us, and to make us in some way realise that, as a matter of fact, prayer is not always what it should be in this particular, our Saviour contrasts the prayer of the Pharisee with that of the Publican, the former of whom offered

to God what was but a mockery, while the latter uttered what was a reality ; the one hiding all his wounds, while the other laid them all bare, the Pharisee congratulating himself on what he was, the Publican blaming himself for what he was not.

Before examining more closely the prayers that were offered, as our Lord tells us, by this Pharisee and this Publican in the Temple, let us for a moment pause to remind ourselves of some characteristic features so noticeable in the two classes of men represented by the Pharisee and the Publican, to whom our Lord directs our attention.

Who, then, were the Pharisees ? They were a body of men who made a profession of being more strictly religious than their fellows. In fact, they formed a distinct religious party among the Jews, holding, for instance, contrary to the teaching of the Sadducees, that besides the written law of Moses there was also an oral law which explained and amplified the written law. Indeed, there was scarcely any text in Scripture for which the Pharisees had not ready to hand an oral explanation and a further oral law.

For instance, they taught that it was a sin to partake of food on which the proper tithe had not been paid, or which had been handled or slaughtered by a heathen. But even among themselves they could not easily agree on many points of their traditions. The followers of the school of Shammai said that an egg laid on the Sabbath day might be eaten, whereas the disciples of Hillel made it a sin for anyone to do so.

But what are we to think of the Pharisees? This question I shall be able to answer better when I have told you what they thought of themselves. If they had a very poor opinion of all but themselves, and the supremest contempt of all for Publicans, the Pharisees thought very well indeed of themselves, carrying their arrogance to lengths that were overbearing.

They loved nothing better than to make a display of their religious tenets; and so they frequented the thronged parts of the city, the market-place and the street corners, where they posed before the public, with a view of enlisting its homage and its salutations. If there was a public feast, you knew exactly at what table to find them,

and if there was a sacred service, you might be sure where they would be seen attitudinising in prayer. Briefly, to conclude my description of them in the words of Him Who reads hearts as well as sees actions, "All their works they did to be seen of men," which means, I take it, they were professional hypocrites.

You can well understand how odious to Jesus Christ was this type of man, the Pharisee. No fewer than eight times in a single discourse our Lord is heard to exclaim, "Wo to you, Pharisees!" The spiritual cant of the Pharisee, the external formalism of the Pharisee, the unreality, the self-assertiveness, and the self-centred life of the Pharisee were so repellent to our Lord, so offensive, and so revolting to Him that He did not hesitate to proclaim what He thought of them, calling them "whited sepulchres," "hypocrites," "full of dead men's bones and filthiness," men "straining at gnats and swallowing camels," "shutting against others the gates of Heaven which they themselves did not enter."

Did time permit, I should like to point out to you how, from the very

first, this sect of Pharisees had marshalled their forces against our Lord: opposing and attacking Him whenever and wherever the opportunity offered, and finally laying snares to capture Him in order to bring about His death.

But here for a moment I must leave the Pharisees, because I want to call your attention to that much-hated class of men called Publicans. The Publicans, or tax-gatherers, were a section of the community who made their livelihood by collecting the Roman revenues. I scarcely need remind you that it was the practice of the Romans in countries subjugated by them to farm the taxes and customs to capitalists, who undertook to pay into the Roman treasury a certain sum yearly. The capitalists in turn sublet these sources of income to men whose business it was to go up and down the country collecting the taxes. They were chiefly needy Jews, called Publicans, who took up this employment, and, as usually happens even now in countries where sub-officials are underpaid, these Publicans more often than not overcharged for goods

taken in or out of the cities, whenever they felt they could do so safely.

You can well understand how men engaged in so compromising a pursuit as that of the tax-gatherer were not too well liked by their countrymen. But to their countrymen the Publicans added insult to injury, because the Jews, besides resenting having to pay taxes at all, considered it almost a crime to pay them to the hated foreigner through members of their own race. Accordingly the people, but most especially the Pharisees who represented the national party, looked upon Publicans as traitors to their country, as mean and sordid fellows, who, by their relations with the hated Roman had denationalised themselves and become unclean and excommunicate. Hence Publicans and Sinners, by righteous Pharisees, were placed under the same condemnation. Neither would the priests have anything to do with them, nor with their money, refusing even to allow them to put alms into the Corban or Temple alms-box. Nay, the unfortunate Publican, if he ventured to appear in the Temple at all, was forbidden to pass beyond the Soreg—the

barrier which at one time shut off, under penalty of death, the Gentile from the Jew.

But, perhaps, nothing can give us a better idea how detestable and loathsome to the people of Israel were Publicans and Sinners than the fact that one of the chief charges which the Pharisees brought against our Lord, the one on which they chiefly relied with the people was this, that He was known to be the friend of Publicans and Sinners.

With these leading characteristic differences between Pharisee and Publican before us, we may now follow to the Temple those two, who, our Lord tells us, went up there to pray.

Observe, then, the faultlessly-garbed Pharisee, as he leaves his house and crosses the west end of the city, making for the Temple Mount. Passing through the Gate Beautiful into the Temple itself, he makes his way along the marble pavement of many colours, so finely polished that he may stoop to admire in it the reflection of his well-draped person, as he sweeps under the colonnade of snow-white pillars that seem to him to be placed there on pur-

pose to do him reverence. Approaching the Soreg his attention is arrested by the bowed form of a Publican, who is striking his breast, sobbing out some prayer of contrition. Instinctively the Pharisee gathers about him the ample folds of his robes, and hurries past, lest by breathing the same air as that Sinner he may himself suffer some defilement. Having crossed the barrier, beyond which neither Publican nor Gentile may pass, the self-righteous man once more shakes out the folds of his garments, and mounting the broad flight of steps leading to the Court of Women, he stalks forward till the Court of Israel, beyond the second flight of steps, is finally reached. Farther than this he may not go. In front of him stands the Holy of Holies, where the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob revealed Himself; at his back is the Temple, with its many courts and its many worshippers. It is the one appropriate spot in God's House for the prayer of a Pharisee; so there he pauses and strikes an attitude, while at the same time he raises his voice so that no one present may miss the choice wording of his prayer. Listen

to it: "O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Having delivered himself of these sentiments, accompanied by appropriate gesture, the Pharisee felt there was nothing more to be done; he had more than fulfilled his duty, so, bowing profoundly before the Holy Place, he turns upon his heels and paces once more the length of the Temple, passing again the prayer-bent Publican, upon whom he haughtily bestows a look of supreme pity and contempt. Once again in the open the Pharisee makes his way through the busier parts of the city, pausing the while at the street corners, and again posing in the market-place, till finally he reaches his home, where, for a second time, he thanks God that he is not as the rest of men.

Our Divine Lord implies that this prayer was as hateful to His Father as it seemed pleasing to the Pharisee. And why was this? To begin with, this "whited sepulchre" of a man divides the human race into two sections; the one comprising all extor-

tioners and all unjust and adulterous persons, among whom he places the Publican seen in the Temple, the other reserved for no one but himself. Having opened his prayer by thanking God for what he was not, the Pharisee went on to congratulate himself for what he was, as it were, reminding the Almighty, lest He should forget, of the many virtuous deeds that went to make up his self-righteous life. Indeed, he seemed to be so overwhelmed by the thought of all that he was, that it never, even for a moment, entered into his self-conceited mind to ask pardon for what he was not, his chief source of comfort being that he was so different from, that is to say, so much better than anyone else. "I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men."

Meanwhile, let me ask you, what has become of the Publican? How has he employed his prayer-time in the Temple? When following the Pharisee we had but a moment in which to cast a hurried glance at him under the cluster of Ionic columns that surrounded the Court of the Gentiles; now we may draw nearer to him, and pause to

contemplate his figure as he stands all dust-stained, with such a sad face bent forward, and eyes so full of tears, while again and again he strikes his breast almost wildly, in the vehemence of his broken-hearted contrition. Unfortunate man! Owned by none and hated of all, the burden of life has been almost more than he can bear. Week in, week out, he has had to ply his trade, to squeeze out what moneys he could from all sorts and conditions of men in order to meet his liabilities, and to make a pittance on which barely to support an existence at the best of times hardly worth living. Poor Publican! he has a heart like anyone else, but there is no one to feed its love-hunger; he needs, as we all do, the sunshine of sympathy, and there is none to give him any. He does not, indeed, profess to have lived a wholly blameless life, but, sinner though he is, he is surely not quite so bad as they make him out to be. Who so wretched, so forlorn as he? The wild ass on the mountain side, nay, the scavenger dog in the street seems to him to be less harshly treated than he. But for the saving thought of God, All-mighty, All-holy,

All-lovely, and All-merciful, he would long since have done away with himself, for there was nothing here to live for; while beyond, the worst, so he felt, could scarcely be more terrible than what he had always known. But the thought of God and the Fatherhood of God has all through sustained him, and has now drawn him away from the hissing crowd, and from the glare of the city, into the soothing peace of the Temple, where, prostrate before the God of all consolation, he lets loose his pent-up feelings, and cries for strength to carry yet farther, if so he must, life's burden, or else for release from a yoke that seems to be gnawing his very soul away. Hush! listen! catch the accents of this poor man's prayer: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Observe there is no posing here, no playing a part, no putting himself into comparison with others, no self-congratulation, but, on the contrary, the Publican is so keenly conscious of the contrast between God's sanctity and his own ungodliness, that he feels there is nothing for it but to throw himself upon the mercy of his Maker, acknowledging with unfeigned regret,

all the sins and shortcomings of his past life.

Behold here a man really in earnest, one who brings to prayer a soul conscious of sin ; one who acknowledges he has fallen short of his mission, one who recognises that the supreme law of life is to do and to bear God's Will. This mission the Publican sees he has failed to fulfil ; accordingly he is ashamed of his life, and resolves, with God's help, to make a fresh start, and no matter what may be the difficulties, he is determined to push his way steadily through all, and in future to be brave for God, trusting in Him supremely, solely, even should it be " in the midst of the shadow of death."

Having struggled through his prayer, the Publican leaves the Temple humbly penitent but bravely resolute to meet the trials that may await him in his daily round of work.

We have now heard what the Pharisee and what the Publican, who went up to the Temple to pray, have each of them had to say. I will not ask you for your comments on the two prayers, because our Divine Master has already told us what He Himself thinks of

them. The chief thing always to know is what our Lord thinks. Well, He seems to think very badly of the prayer of the Pharisee, but very well of that of the Publican. In fact, our Lord reminds us that it was the Publican and not the Pharisee who went home from prayer justified — brought back to the peace of God. With the Pharisee prayer was a mere sham, with the Publican it was a stern reality.

And now what are we to learn from all this? Like the Pharisee and the Publican we, too, are sinners, and like them some of us, at anyrate, come at stated times to the Temple to pray. The question, I take it, which we have to face is this: does our devotion resemble the prayer of the Pharisee or that of the Publican? This question is one which you must each of you answer for yourselves. But this much I may, perhaps, be permitted to suggest, that life—especially society life of the leisured classes — being what it is, namely, artificial and conventional, you are, I say, exposed to the danger of being, like the Pharisee, formal and unreal in your prayer.

If life in general is like a drama in which each of us plays his part, the life of fast, smart people partakes even still more of the character of a play. Now, on the stage, nearly everything is unreal, artificial—the part played, the love made, the hatred shown, nay, the very stage properties themselves—the trappings, finery, jewellery are all, often enough, are they not, unreal and artificial as the *mise-en-scène* itself.

Now how about so-called society life as it is lived, say, in our midst in Mayfair? Is it less unreal, less artificial, less conventional than the stage life to which I have referred? You will, I feel sure, be the first to allow that the three months, say, of the London season, are not at all unlike three acts of a play, which, when the curtain has been rung down, you are only too often forced to look back upon as a stupid farce, if it may not have proved a terrible tragedy.

It is not my purpose to describe in detail the acts and scenes which go to make up this social pageant, trailing its surface glitter over the three loveliest months of the year, but I do wish to call your attention to them in order to

justify myself in asking you this question: When you are almost in spite of yourselves so habitually playing a part in life, is there not some danger of your continuing to play it even when you are at your prayers?

Actors, as you are aware, sometimes become so absorbed in the rôle they are playing, and get so identified with the characters they assume, that they continue to personify them, even when they have left the footlights and have returned to their own homes. Well, it seems to me that fast, smart people of Society, who nearly all day long, ay, and all night long too, are, unconsciously perhaps, acting a part, must, of necessity, find it very difficult indeed, to say the least of it, to recall themselves to themselves when suddenly the tolling of the bell summons them to prayer. Then when they find themselves on their knees, it surely cannot be very easy for them to forget their social position, their successes, as they call them, their class distinctions, their worldly goods, and their immediate *entourage*, and all at once suddenly to remember that they are not what they seem to be in the eyes of the world, but

what they really are before God. To illustrate what I mean; must it not be somewhat difficult for the *débutante* beauty in any kind of way to realise that before God Almighty she may quite possibly be less worthy of His favour than her maid worn out by waiting up for her night after night? The great lady, too, accustomed to every sort of deference, as she takes part in some church service can hardly find it very easy to understand that in the sight of God she herself may be of far less account than her meanest servant in the scullery. And may not the same be said of the smart man about town, or of the millionaire with wealth enough to buy up half a continent? Is there any more likelihood, nature being what it is, for him to lay hold of the truth that the poorest lad in his stable-yard may quite possibly be the one member of his household whom the Lord hath a mind to honour, and not himself, whose will abroad as at home is inexorable law?

Say what you will, there is a special danger—and it is no remote one—of fashionable Society forgetting to return to its own true self in prayer.

Unless votaries of pleasure are on their guard, they will continue as a matter of course to pose even before Almighty God Himself. Hence, are we not all warned in the words of Scripture: "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as one that tempteth God."

Is it not right, then, that we should all be warned to avoid the example of the Pharisee either in congratulating ourselves on what we are, or on what we have done? Rather let us encourage ourselves to follow the Publican, striking our breasts, weeping because we have not done—because we have omitted both to do as well as to bear—the ever-blessed Will of God.

But here I may, perhaps, be permitted to ask: does a certain section of Society, does the fast Smart Set go to church at all? Where, I ask, and how do they spend their Sunday? Is it, forsooth, on the river, or in the motor, or is it in bed? One thing is, I fear, only too certain, it is not spent—not even a paltry half-hour of it—in church. Why, in this closely-packed Mayfair we are converting churches into residences or eating-houses. Churches are not wanted. Why do they cumber the

ground? Down with the House of God, and up with the Mansion of Mammon! The fact is, there is no room anywhere in London except in its churches.

Where then, again I ask, do these people who have been lent so many good things by God go to thank Him for His bounties on Sunday? Probably they will tell me that they cannot get to church at all; in fact, there is no time even for a passing thought of God on that Day of Rest for dull people, because for them, as members of a Gay Set, Sunday is, of all days of the week, quite the busiest. Yes, alas, how true! It is full up, there is no room for Him: "He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not," "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

You see "week-endings" have become part of the British Constitution, and nowadays everybody who is anybody has to be out of town in the season, say from Saturday to Tuesday. So Sundays, which our forefathers consecrated to praising God, and feasting the soul, and resting the body, are, nowadays, devoted to playing golf or bridge,

indulging the body and starving the soul. Yes, present-day Smart People are so pre-occupied with catering for their bodies that they quite forget their famishing souls; in fact, I fear, they have so lost sight of their souls, for which our Lord reminds us no exchange can be made, that, practically speaking, it might be said of them that they are as soulless as they are godless, and hopeless. "*Quid prodest?*" Alas! "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

Imagine this country, which not half a century ago boasted so proudly of its rigid observance of the Sabbath, coming to a state of things when God's Day is observed as the busiest, the gayest, and the most profaned of all profaned days in the whole week. For a moment consider how it is now kept by fast Smart People in their smart English country places, with, perhaps, a church situated within the park gates. When they do get up on Sundays it is, as I have said, to feed and feast their bodies with untold courses of food stuff, for which, I very much fear, they never dream of thanking God at all. What

vulgar ingratitude is this, with which to start another week of life, treating God with less consideration than they do the servants who bring round the hot dishes.

Breakfast done, unless it be as a sort of joke, there is no mention of Church at all, but only of walks or drives, or the stables, or golf, or else of bridge under the trees on the lawn, which means more than I need reveal. "These are thy gods, O Israel!"

With Sunday—the Lord's Day, as it used to be called in Protestant England—begun in this fashion, you may well imagine what becomes of it before it is done.

What profanation! The Lord's Day without a passing thought of what He is in Himself, or what He is to them, nay, without one single thought of what they are not, or of what they should be. If this is a sign of the times we may well say England is on the downward grade. Alas, alas, and woe, woe! Well may we cry out with the prophet: "My people have done two great evils; they have abandoned me the fountain of living water, and have dug for themselves cisterns that can hold no water."

" I have brought up children, and they have despised me."

But someone may ask, what business it is of mine where or how fast Smart People spend their Sunday; and I shall be told whatever else they are they surely can not be Catholics. Very, very few of them, thank God, pretend to belong to us,though there are always to be found, even among so-called Catholics, some whose highest ambition in life is to be considered as belonging to this vicious circle, this contemptible fast Smart Set, which among its other crimes desecrates Sunday, setting the worst example to the many in its service.

As an Englishman who loves his country, and as a Catholic who loves his Church, and as a Priest who loves his people, I raise my voice against these terrible profanations with all that they involve, not because I am so silly as to believe I can, in any great measure, stop these abuses, but because I sincerely hope that, at least, I may be allowed to call serious attention to them, and may even perhaps, with God's blessing, be able to create some public righteous indignation against them. It is the utter godlessness of the

Sunday which cries to Heaven itself for vengeance.

Think for a moment what these week-ends, with their practices, mean to quite a large number of servants. If these Smart People imagine they themselves have no souls, at anyrate their servants have souls, and some of them, to my knowledge, want to save them.

And what chance have they of saving them ? What opportunities have they of looking after them at all, when it is as much as they can do to attend, with any kind of satisfaction, to the innumerable wants of their employers and of the house party, whose losses at cards and whose reckless living do not, you may be sure, always leave them in the best of humour.

We hear a good deal, nowadays, and with good reason, about the faults of servants ; but what example is set them for the correction of these faults ? We cannot be surprised if servants mimic their masters : and oh, the pity of it !

It is this wholesale profanation of Sunday which is so great a wrong ; it is this sweating of servants on Sundays with which in a very special way I find fault. It means, it must mean, in

process of time, the total extinction of Christianity for those who once upon a time cherished whatever fragments they had of it. Let me call upon you to " gather up the fragments," before it is too late.

I have digressed, carried away by sorrow for those who, having so long lived in the Smart Set, have at last discovered, so they think, that they can do as well with no religion at all as with the little they once had when they played with it.

Let me in conclusion exhort you all to be like the Publican in the Temple, simple and sincere before your God, and to put to the very best uses what religion you have, for there is no substitute whatever for it. Upon the character of our religion will depend our weal or woe throughout eternity. Let us bring up our practice, as far as may be, to a level with our belief. I have reminded you life is not unlike a play in which each of us has to " take " a part. In this I am but following St Paul, who, as Cardinal Newman points out : " On one occasion speaks of the world as a scene in a theatre. Consider what is meant by this. You

know actors on a stage are on an equality with each other in reality, but for the occasion they assume a difference of character; some are high, some are low, some are merry, and some sad." "Well," continues the great ascetic, "would it not be a simple absurdity for any actor to pride himself on his mock diadem, on his edgeless sword, instead of attending to his part? What if he did but gaze at himself and his dress? What if he secreted or turned to his own use what was valuable in it? Is it not his sole business to act his part well? Common sense tells us so. Now, we are all actors in this world; we are one and all equals; we shall be judged as equals as soon as life is over; yet, equal and similar in ourselves, each has his special part at present, each has his work, each has his mission—not to indulge his passions, not to make money, not to get a name in the world, not to save himself trouble, not to follow his bent, not to be selfish and self-willed, but to do what God puts on him to do."

Believe me, it is quite useless for anyone to attempt to play well the part

assigned him by God in this world, unless first of all he learns it, so to speak, by heart in prayer, and gets direction through prayer how correctly to play it. It is, then, imperative that we should both make time for prayer, and should force ourselves to be like the poor Publican, humble and contrite in prayer, and regular in the practice of it. Take warning from one I knew, who, whilst all went well with him, dispensed himself from prayer, as though it were a pastime and not a duty. Alas, a great sorrow, a deep bereavement came upon this spoilt son of fortune, and then, when he felt he must pray, he could not. Again and again he flung himself on his knees, and wringing his hands he sighed: "Oh! what would I not give—all I have—if only I could cry to God for comfort, for relief; but pray I cannot, and there is no one on this earth so miserable as I am; I can't weep, I can't pray; I can only curse God, hating Him."

Turn then once more to the picture drawn for us by our Divine Master, and study the attitude struck by the Pharisee, and the position taken by the

Publican when engaged in this most sacred work. Or rather, leave at once the Pharisee and come to the Publican, for there is one position and one only to take up when engaged in prayer, and that is the attitude not of the Pharisee but of the Publican. See him with bowed head and broken heart striking his breast as he pleads so piteously: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." To me there is no figure more attractive than this despised Publican. He is an object-lesson to us all. He teaches us whatever else we may be when playing our respective parts upon the stage of social life, before God we are all of us—priests and people—without distinction, sinners standing sorely in need of the mercy of Him Whose property it is always to have mercy and to spare. Let me then encourage you to practise abiding sorrow for sin, making frequent acts of contrition for it, often repeating with the Psalmist that *Miserere* in which is to be found for a wounded spirit the choicest balm, and for the broken heart the surest healing "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Our best security against sin in the future is sorrow for our sins in the past.

Let no one turn a deaf ear to my appeal, saying he knows not how to be sorry, or that he has nothing to be sorry for, or that he has but done as others do, or as the bent of his nature has led him to act; but, on the contrary, let each one confess that he has, as he in reality knows he has, fallen short of his duty both to God and to his neighbour, and to his own true self, and that he has pursued a selfish career, having made too little of true religion and too much of this world.

O my brethren, it is this sense of sin, and of the nature of sin—of its malice and heinousness—that is so sorely needed in order to make it and ourselves, who have embraced it, hateful in our own eyes. Turn then here and now to the Lord your God Who made you, and Who still loves you; offer to Him hearts at once contrite and humble, beseeching Him to forgive your past offences, to bless your present resolves, and to strengthen your future efforts. Throw yourselves upon Him, embrace His Sacred Feet, hide yourselves in His Heart, and rely on His mercy, which above all His attri-

butes is ever and always exercised in our behalf. Trust Him simply—

> Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood.

Listen, and let the despondent realise that if only he brings a contrite heart, the arms of a merciful Saviour will embrace Him—

Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy. God has none.
Yes, man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,
Yet he stoops to give it. More complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,
And pleads with thee to raise it. Only Heaven
Means crowned, not vanquished, when it says forgiven.

DIVES AND LAZARUS

PARABLE

S. LUKE, XVI, 19–31

DIVES AND LAZARUS

There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen: and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my

tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither. And he said: Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead.

DIVES AND LAZARUS

Our Divine Lord had been speaking in the hearing of Pharisees and others to His disciples, telling them to what use man might best put his worldly goods, at the same time taking care to warn them against the sin of covetousness which happened to be a characteristic fault of the Pharisees. He made a point of reminding them that no servant can serve two masters, and finally He concluded His discourse with the word: "You cannot serve God and Mammon." At this point, the Pharisees, who were feeling very bad, could hold in check their anger no longer, St Luke saying that they began to deride Him.

The Great Teacher, observing the indignation and derision of the Pharisees, proceeded to illustrate His teaching in the matter of riches by lifting the veil and disclosing a scene in the world beyond, where man appears not in his

assumed but in his real character—in a word, as he is before the God Who made him, reaping what he had sown.

Whether the narrative of Dives and Lazarus is to be taken, with Irenæus and Tertullian to be a true history, or merely as a parable to point the lesson taught, it is not my province here to determine. To my thinking, it is a genuine story, given in the form of a parable, or, as St Ambrose puts it, "*Est narratio magis quam parabola.*"

Our Lord tells us that there was a certain rich man (whose name, perhaps because it was well known in the neighbourhood, He withholds), who "was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day." You will observe that our Lord does not say that the rich man's dress was out of keeping with his rank, or that his table was beyond what he could afford, though His language does seem to imply that those who habitually cover their bodies with soft raiment and line them with rich viands are rendering a virtuous life difficult and a vicious life almost irresistibly easy. Pampering the body means pandering to vice, especially when it becomes, as it

did with Dives, a daily practice. We are so constituted that unless self-denial enters very largely into our material life, there is the likelihood, if not the certainty, of the fall and ruin of our spiritual life. Hence the word: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself."

Self-denial was no part of the rich man's programme. He would have laughed to scorn anyone who had dared to preach so ascetic a doctrine to him. No, "He fared sumptuously every day." "Everything," as a modern writer points out, "belonging to him was in the best style, as men speak; his house, his furniture, his plate of silver and gold, his attendants, his establishments. Everything was for enjoyment, and for show too; to attract the eyes of the world, and to gain the applause and admiration of his equals, who were the companions of his sins. These companions were doubtless such as became a person of such high pretensions; they were fashionable men, eating, not gluttonously, but what was rare and costly; delicate, exact, fastidious in their taste, from their very habits of indulgence; not eating for

the mere sake of eating, or drinking for the mere sake of drinking, but making a sort of science of their sensuality ; sensual, carnal, as flesh and blood can be, with eyes, ears, tongue, steeped in impurity, every thought, look, and sense witnessing or ministering to the Evil One who held them ; yet, with exquisite correctness of idea and judgment, laying down rules for sinning ; heartless and selfish, high, punctilious, and disdainful in their outward deportment, and shrinking from Lazarus, who lay at the gate, as an eyesore, who ought, for the sake of decency, to be put out of the way."

How many years this rich man continued to enjoy, and, as we have charitably supposed, invited others to enjoy at his festive board the good things of this world, I do not pretend to know, for we are only told this about him, that while he did live he was so self-centred, so absorbed in all things that minister to the gratification of self, that it did not even occur to him that he possibly might have duties to his poor brother, Lazarus. Certainly Dives could not pretend he was ignorant of the need Lazarus had of help, for

whenever he had occasion to drive through those park gates he must have observed the pauper lying there, while the beggar's piercing cries for an alms must sometimes, at least, have rung like an alarm bell in his soul.

What a world of contrasts is this! How inexplicable but for the providence of God is the difference in condition of the lives, say of Dives and Lazarus—the one possessing everything, the other nothing. The position of Lazarus is especially trying, for he finds himself not merely in a state of utter destitution, without even the barest necessities which make life just tolerable, but he has to endure all this with the rich man's gilded splendours flashing in a most tantalising way before his very eyes. And yet, we are told, "No man gave him even of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table."

The poor are our great teachers. I remember another Lazarus, living in a hovel near a rich man's lodge. On one occasion I ventured to ask him whether the sight of the splendours of wealth was a temptation to him. "Father," was his reply, "I would not give for all the treasures in the house

yonder a lock of hair of the head of my little one. From what I can hear, they are not so happy as we be."

How long poor Lazarus continued his struggle to hold on, in a state so helpless that he had not even strength to drive away the scavenger dogs that came to lick his sores, I know not. All that I can say is this, that the day came when the beggar man was beyond the reach of help, when the rich man was rid for ever of the ghastly sight at his park gates. Lazarus was dead, and the recording angel who held the inquest sent to Heaven the verdict, "Found starved to death at the rich man's gates."

Our Lord's description of the beggar's death is full of significance. He says, "And it came to pass that the beggar died." So, after all, the hard life as well as the easy one; the poor man's fast and struggle as well as the rich man's feast and revel, all come to pass —to pass away, to pass away for evermore. Yes, this shifting scene, with its light and shade, is passing away like the dissolving views we followed so keenly in childhood, while rich and poor and young and old glide into sight and glide

out of it again, till at length night begins to creep over the picture, and finally all is dark.

You will perhaps ask me: what became of the beggar man after death? When he went hence, whither did he go? Did he or did he not survive that vesture of broken clay in which his soul struggled so hard to live near the rich man's gates? To all these questions our Lord has already given the answer in the word of good news: "The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Heaven! what a sight suddenly to break upon the vision of one whose eyes, for so many years, had watched the swinging of bronze gates, hoping in vain to see some kind soul bringing him a handful of crumbs to feed his hunger, or a draught of water to slake his thirst. Now Lazarus finds himself actually passing through the Golden Gates, and is being borne on the wings of angels, past multitudes innumerable, crying aloud: "*Pauper in cœlum dives ingreditur.*" "*Io triumphe!*" "*Io triumphe!*" to the Great White Throne. O Lazarus, can you believe your own ears as you catch the word of welcome: "Well

done, good and faithful servant ; enter into the joy of thy Lord." O blessed poverty that has purchased for thee so glorious and palatial a home!

Let me ask you what was the beggar's passport to heaven, and what the title-deed giving him right to so splendid a reception there ? Surely not the bare fact of poverty, because there is no more merit in being poor than in being rich. No, it was not poverty, but bearing his poverty patiently and for God's sake that made Lazarus so pleasing to God, so worthy of heaven, so entitled to a life of joy triumphant in the land of victory for evermore. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

What sight is there finer, nobler, loftier, or holier on earth than the life of a poor man doing the will of God as the Blessed do in heaven, and bearing it patiently no less ? Such a man was Lazarus, whose life suggests the lines of the poet—

> All that He blesses is our good ;
> And unblessed good is ill ;
> And all is right that seems most wrong
> If it is His blessed will.

Meanwhile what has become of

Dives? Surely the relentless hand of Death will scarcely dare to lay hold of one so little used to anything but the softest touches, the rarest dainties, the richest viands, and the choicest wines. Alas, no gilded palm can avail to bribe away the tyrant Death. When God rings at the door of the rich man, even he must drop his task, though it be gambling with millions, and go forth just as he is to answer it. When God rings us up there is no forgetting we are servants, all sent here, I may say, to answer the bell.

If Dives lived for a time engrossed in the pursuit of selfish pleasures, and of all that ministers to the gratification of the animal self, at length there came a moment when he received a rude shock. Perhaps it took the form of apoplexy, or of some other sudden stroke due to habits of self-indulgence; and then, before it even occurred to him to give a passing thought to his poor soul, perhaps when he was thinking he was getting better, and was, perchance, looking forward to the high time in store for him; nay, it may be while he was actually cursing fortune and his physician because he did not feel better

and stronger, suddenly there was a struggle, and he fell back dead. What an object-lesson to all votaries of pleasure is contained in this word, "And the rich man *also* died."

There is left us no description of this great man's magnificently appointed and numerously attended funeral. Doubtless it was all done in the very best style, and carried out regardless of expense, and you may be sure his richly-studded coffin was literally smothered with the bloom of God's creation—roses and lilies, those emblems of the beauty of love and the chastity of life. Alas, there is no lie on earth like the pageant of a rich man's funeral, unless it be the epitaph on his tombstone.

It does not particularly interest me to know where the rich man's body was buried, but it does alarm me not a little to hear on our Lord's authority that his soul—in other words, that he himself, was lost, "And the rich man also died and was buried in hell." What a terrible awakening was that, when the eyes of his soul, so long closed, were first opened, and he found himself being clawed by devils bearing him

away to the torments of the bottomless pit. On earth it was Lazarus who felt the contrast between his and the rich man's position ; now it is Dives. Our Lord describes this gilded son of fortune lifting up his eyes in the midst of torments and seeing afar off Abraham, with Lazarus in his bosom, and our Divine Teacher informs us what was the agonising cry of this poor rich man : " Father Abraham, have mercy on me," is the piteous prayer ; " send me Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame." Oh, what a sight is this—a rich man, for whom the best on earth had been scarcely good enough, piteously pleading for but one single drop of water momentarily to cool the tip of his tongue, and begging for it from the beggar to whom he had refused the crumbs of his table and water from his fountain.

Observe, our Lord depicts this miserable worldling as burning in fire. It is our Divine Master who has put into the cry of Dives from hell the word : " I am tormented in this flame." Call this place or state what you will—hell

or Hades, or what not, what does the name signify ?—the man is in torment, and whether that torment partakes of the nature of fire such as we know it or not, it matters little. What does matter is this, that He Who knows the value of language better than any of us, has chosen the word " fire " in its acutest form—flame—as the best one of all by which to express the rich man's torture in hell. And our Lord wishes us, before it is too late, here and now, to try and picture to ourselves the man, once " clothed in purple and fine linen and feasting sumptuously every day," now wrapped in fire and flames, and now tortured with such a maddening thirst that his cry for " Water, water, one single drop of water," reaches the ears of Lazarus far off at rest in the bosom of Abraham. But it is too late, too late ; the day for mercy has passed into the darkness of eternal night, and so Dives hears only the relentless answer : " Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime and Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou are tormented." Yes, Dives, as we saw, once drank deep of the cup of pleasure, he had plenty of

"good things" and misused them; plenty of opportunities, and neglected them; so many chances, and lost them, every one—notably the special one that had been brought to his very gates. Lazarus, on the contrary, had received but "evil things," and these within the daily sight of the rich man's "good things," and yet he never complained, never even thought hard things of God, but had just left himself in God's hands, waiting for God's time, knowing there is nothing better for God's creatures than to bear God's will, trusting Him as a child his mother. So Lazarus now is "comforted," but Dives is "tormented."

And here I wish to call the attention of Restorationists and Universalists, as well as all members of the school of the "Larger Hope," to the words put by our Lord into the mouth of Abraham. What a terrifying dogma they embody, what a lesson they teach, what a warning they ought to convey. "Besides all this, there is fixed a great chasm between us and you, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither."

Obviously enough, if these words are

meant to convey any truth at all they tell us this, that the yawning gulf fixed between Dives and Lazarus is too deep to be filled up, too wide to be bridged over. Yes, and the chasm will remain for ever impassable, so that, once in hell, always in hell. Does not this seem to be the obvious meaning of this passage in the account given us by our Lord of Dives in the other world ?

I know I shall be met by a sheaf of rhetorical arguments against the possibility of any such horribly cruel interpretation, and I shall be reminded that even the ascetic Baptist speaks of our Lord as a Bridegroom, as a Lamb, and who am I that I should dare to make Him anything else ? Well, let it be, but whenever I am confronted with these specious objections I am thrown upon a passage in the Gospel story where our kind and gracious Lord warns us in these words : " Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul into hell."

If this word of warning is powerless to drive home our Lord's teaching about the enormity of sin and the

eternity of hell, of course no argument of mine will do so.

"But," perhaps someone will exclaim, "I see improvement in Dives; he is becoming less self-centred, and is putting forth thought and care for his brothers." And in support of this contention I shall hear presently cited the request which our Lord seems to put into the mouth of the man in torments: "Then, Father, I beseech thee, that thou wouldst send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments." Personally, from these words, I see no amendment in Dives. In his petition that a message may be sent to his brothers, there may be, may there not, a selfish motive only? I can quite fancy with what fear and dread this rich worldling would meet on the threshold of hell those brothers who would taunt him, reminding him of the bad example he had set them, giving him instance after instance, till he would be nearly driven, as we should say, by them to impotent madness. Alas! when the wayfarer's journey is over, when his life of probation is run,

he is either saved or lost ; if lost he is lost for ever. " As the tree falls, so shall it lie."

No doubt, the rich brother eternally damned, does suggest that from what he knows of his brothers he thinks there may be some hope of their repentance, for he urges, " If one went to them from the dead, they will do penance."

How fond worldly people are of laying down conditions upon the fulfilment of which they will become converts to the Faith and be " perfect saints." Yet, we all know that if such a miracle as the one asked for were to take place, they would not believe in it ; they would say, would they not, " Miracles do not happen."

In confirmation of the truth of what I say, listen to Abraham's answer to the request of Dives : " If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead."

Let me ask you, do present-day worldlings believe that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead ? Of course, they believe in no such thing, and they go on to account for the belief of

others in it by suggesting a Vision theory or a Non-death theory as their explanation of the dogma about our Lord's Resurrection. One thing, they say, is certain, namely, that if Jesus Christ did rise from the grave, He never died, while, if He did die, then He must still be dead. How pregnant in the mouth of our dear and blessed Lord is this word of prophecy, uttered that all votaries of pleasure in all time may hear it. "Neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead." Ay, not even when that One is Jesus Christ Himself. And what is the lesson that we to-day are to learn from this story, told us by our Lord, of Dives and Lazarus? This, I take it, is what we have to bring home to ourselves, that the world's measure of virtue and vice, of right and wrong, of good and evil, when tested by our Lord's standard of these things, will be found to be altogether false; there will be a terrible reckoning to pay.

From what we read of fast Smart Society, from what we see of it, and from what we know of it, we need, I think, have no hesitation in saying that if Dives, who was buried in hell,

were to re-visit this earth he would have the *entrée* to London's Smartest Set to-day. He would be, would he not, literally pelted with invitations? And why not? Dives, so well-groomed and turned out: with a larder so well-lined, and a cellar so well-stocked, would be an ideal host to cultivate! He would, you know, "do you so well," and you would be sure to meet "the right people" at his place, and you could always bring there your "latest friend." Besides, it would be so delightful to get asked to his house-parties, where there would be no fear of being bored, and no chance of feeling dull. The fact is, in our Lord's account of Dives, I read the very best possible description of the smart man in the Smart Set, so much in evidence to-day.

Society nowadays, as we all know, is every bit as material as it was when Dives was alive. It still cares very little, indeed, for what it cannot either put on or into itself. It is self-centred. Its fair votaries must be set up by the best man-milliner, and fed up by the best man-cook; and then, provided they are known at the opera by their diamonds, in Mayfair by their motors,

and at Cowes by their yacht, nothing else matters, especially if they happen to have a house at Ascot and a launch at Henley for the racing weeks.

It is not so much persons as things that count in this age of materialism. Hence there is but one sin less pardonable than that of being dull, and that is being poor. After all, there may be some excuse for dulness if you have money, but there is simply none at all for poverty, which like dirt on one's shoes, or dust on one's gown, must be brushed away from sight as soon as possible. Not even poor relatives are tolerated or recognised, except occasionally on an "off-day," when, like some unfortunate governesses in such households, they may be asked to look in at tea-time, when nobody is there. Surely all this is very contemptible, and altogether unworthy of old English traditions. Yes, but old English traditions, with rare exceptions, are being swept away by the incoming tide of millionaire wealth, so that, nowadays, it matters little what you are, but much, nay, everything, what you have. If you command money, you command the world. If you have

none, you are nobody, though you be a prince. Here I can well fancy some fair votary of pleasure asking me why Dives, who was so rich, is said to be in hell. It will be said: "Surely, if he survived his body he ought to be in heaven, if, indeed, there be such a place. What wrong did he do? Why, not even in the story which you have cited as though it were true, is Dives charged with anything more serious than that of making the best of a good time. Would he not have been a fool had he not enjoyed his wealth? He was not bad, he did no positive harm to anyone; on the contrary, he was courteous and hospitable, and one who would be long missed." If you insist, I will for the moment allow that Dives wrought no positive evil, and did no positive harm. Now for my question: has a man discharged the mission upon which he is sent into this world by God, provided at the close of it he happens to escape the verdict passed on a thief or a murderer? has he, then, no responsibilities or duties, say to his household, to his servants, or to his poorer brethren? has he not to give an account of the use made of his wealth, of his

position, of his talents, and of his influence? Is he not merely a steward? Is not his wealth held in trust only for God, his Master? How about the foolish virgins, how about the fool in the Gospel? How about the man who buried the talent, or that other who forgot his wedding garment? In all these cases, to which we must add the case of Dives, we have brought before us by our Lord examples of persons lost, and lost for ever, not so much on account of their sins of commission as of omission. And our Divine Teacher adduces the specially-cited example of Dives, in order to bring home to the Pharisees what I want to drive home to you, that all others, too, will be under the same condemnation, and be buried in hell, unless they take time by the forelock, trade with their talents, and profit by the warning of the rich man's burial, so graphically painted by the hand of the Master.

Wealth is a terrible responsibility, and they who possess it are exposed to such dangers of ruinous selfishness, that I believe our Lord meant literally that "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man

to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." In other words, it is an impossibility for him unless he bears in mind he is but God's steward, who will hold him responsible for every fraction of his riches.

Shirk the question as you will, wriggle out of it as best you may, yet there is no getting away from this fact, writ large so that the man in the street may read it; and this fact is, that the fast Smart Set, about whom I am speaking, are by most people labelled as the concentrated essence of selfishness, unclean and unwholesome as any condemned product of Chicago; or, to borrow the Master's language, "as whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones." At present I do not ask what harm, but only what good, these gilded votaries of pleasure do? Do they even pretend to do their duty? Certainly they do not give any time to prayer, nor much love to their children, nor good example to their servants, nor attention to their accounts, nor consideration to their tradespeople, nor do they give alms to the poor, nor do they pay visits to the sick. Why, as for their bills, they may be seen lying in heaps—unpaid, unopened, on

the boudoir-table, where they remain till flung into the waste-paper basket, with the exclamation, "They are only bills!" How can they give attention to any duty when their day is what it is, and when their centre of gravity is the card-table, and when its winnings are their very highest aim and ambition in life? And it is well when the stakes do happen to drop into their hands, for then there is just a chance of some dressmaker or other tradesman being paid something "on account" before being declared bankrupt. What a life of low, vulgar self-indulgence it is! Does it make the life less shameful and degrading, because they who have gone to their account were even worse?

Of course I shall be told that all this is gross exaggeration. I wish I could think so, but being "in the know," as men say, I say the picture, with its group of people to whom I refer, if I flashed a higher light upon it, would stand out in yet darker lines and still more lurid colours. For example, I have said nothing about the use of narcotics, of opiates, of cocaine, and morphia, which, when freely indulged in, so completely

demoralise their victims. There is no depth of degradation to which the morphiomaniac will not descend, and then lie about it, denying her use of it, though morphia has a trick of leaving its likeness stamped as indelibly on her being as is the king's image on the coin of the realm.

Thank God my strictures in no sense apply to all Smart People, but only to a fast Smart Set, which one might pass over without drawing attention to their vicious, frivolous lives, but for the fact they are so much in evidence, and set such terrible examples. Alas! that my dear, dear country, our England, should have to number among her sons and daughters some who "love vanity and seek after lying," doing the things they should not.

I shall be told that there is little, or perhaps even no truth in what I say. Alas! there never were wanting, at any period of history, or in any country, those who delude themselves, exclaiming even when the symptoms of death are nigh: "'Tis well, 'tis well!" But it is not well, and they whose business it is to diagnose the soul-organism, recognise, as fully as I do, that it is

actually suffering to-day from a malignant growth, which, if not subjected to the unsparing knife, must ultimately threaten the life of the organism itself.

My brethren, we must be brave; we must face, before it is too late, the predominant passion that is making disastrous inroads (together with its many by-products) into our constitution, and undermining its life. We must force ourselves to acknowledge that we are all wrong before we can even hope to become all right, before we can "minister to the mind diseased," and prescribe the remedy.

What we all need is a sense of the responsibilities of life, and of our several appointed missions in it. It is the misfortune of fast Society not to recognise that it is not by mere chance that it finds itself here in the midst of the good things of this world. It will not see that it has been sent here, charged with a mission, deputed to a work; and not only so, but that it is moreover sent here equipped efficiently, splendidly, by an indulgent Father for its work. Yes, God our Father has supplied all of us with means ample enough to fulfil our ends, to attain our

eternal destiny; but upon these rich people He has bestowed superabundant means; if only they will make proper use of them. May I not even say that He has, perhaps, spoilt them with too much indulgence? He, of all fathers, wants the happiness of His children—and what better proof of it can there be than the misery which is theirs who seek for happiness where it is not to be found, outside, and in spite of His wishes—these are they who "look before and after, and pine for what is not." Yes, aping their betters, they beat round about after happiness, whirling, gyrating through the summer months from Mayfair to Cowes, and then on to Carlsbad, and back again to Scotland, till winter sends them first hunting and shooting at home, and then golfing and gambling abroad; and so on they go, not like children on a merry-go-round, but like jaded steeds in a mill, till finally, weary and worn, they find themselves back again in Mayfair, with nothing else before them but the same monotonous round, under the same monotonous circumstances, and with the same monotonous set of people. "They shall wander from sea to sea,

and from the north even to the east, and shall run to and fro." But what do these wanderers on the face of the earth know of true happiness? They try, indeed, to persuade themselves they are happy, and they will tell you they never have a dull moment, nor any free time, that their engagement book for a year to come and more is quite full. But, I ask, are they really happy? Do they know what happiness means? Look at them, listen to them; if they really were happy, then why, I ask, all this fever, fret, and fume; why this incessant rush; why this impatience with what is, and this anxiety for what is not? Nay, the very expressions they wear, the books they read, the words they utter, the intrigues they plan, the feuds they occasion, the rivalries they maintain, and (shall I add), the temper they display, all go to show they are utter strangers to that peace which passeth all understanding.

My brethren, this restlessness, this passion for novelty, this craving for change of dress and of food, of sights and shows, of place and people, ought to convince them, if only they were open to conviction, that the human

heart being thus restless, give it what you will, must be meant to find its home, its peace, its strength, its satisfaction in God—and in none other but God. Yes, as we are made by God, and for God, so only in God can man find his true atmosphere, his true environment, and his true contentment—in a word, his life of happiness.

For a moment call to mind the story of "a certain rich man," whose fine property was bringing him in so large an income that his one absorbing thought was where to bestow his untold wealth, when, finally, came the resolve: "This will *I* do; *I* will pull down, and *I* will build up, and *I* will gather all things that are grown to *me*, and *my* goods. And *I* will say to *my* soul . . . ." What did this rich egoist say? You know it is so interesting to follow the movements and sayings of rich people. Well, this is what is recorded in the Gospel as his saying: "*Soul*, *thou* hast much goods laid up for many years, take *thy* rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." You will observe there is no reference here at all to the wishes of his Maker, there is no expression of thanks to the Giver; there is no desire

to distribute his goods, but to gather them ; no idea of helping his neighbour, but of pampering himself ; no resolve to carry out a great mission, but to enjoy a great fortune : " Eat, drink, make good cheer." And is this a man, and can this bring him happiness ?

Listen to our representative poet—

> What is man
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed ? A beast, no more.
> Sure He that made us with such large discourse
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To rust in us unus'd.

No, God does not send man into this world as He sends the beasts of the field, to eat and sleep, and then to die ; God has His designs for each one of us, whether we be high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant ; and man's first business of all in life is to find out what it is that God wants of him, and of his talents, and of his goods. Sometimes when man, abusing the self-determining power given him by God, chooses, like the rich man in the Gospel, to make a god of himself, ignoring altogether the will of the Creator, God deigns to assert His rights, and forthwith there is swept

from the face of the earth, by sudden death, the creature who, in His presence, and with the faculties lent him for His service, has dared to thwart and defy the Divine Majesty. It was so with this well-to-do egoist in question. He spoke to his soul, saying, "Thou hast many years to run of merry life;" but God said to him: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." After writing this self-centred man's epitaph in four letters—*fool*—our Lord goes on to say: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." And here, I may add, so was Dives, who "fared sumptuously every day," but was poor before God; and so, doubtless, will it be with us if we should come to forget God and His claims upon us in this work-a-day world. Then, indeed, when the end shall come, or rather when the real beginning commences, and this shifting scene with all its feverish excitement and intoxication shall make way for a scene that never passes away, it will go badly with us if God's Will has not been done.

O my beloved countrymen and countrywomen, know this before it is too late, that your happiness consists

in being right with God, in doing the work set you by God, in trying your best to please, not yourselves, but the God Who made you, and Who bled and died to save you.

Now, while there is time, set your houses in order, make your lives human, live as Christians, with care for your souls, with love for your children, and with an eye to your household; grow into union with God by habits of prayer, of contrition, of self-denial, and of purity of intention; guard your thoughts, check your tongues, and restrain your appetites; be decent in dress, modest in manner, and moderate in pleasure; read what is wholesome, write what is truthful, and do what is helpful; pay your bills, feed your poor, and visit your sick; live your lives, realise your responsibilities, and fulfil your mission. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things"; for remember the words: "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

THE TETRARCH AND THE BAPTIST

THE NARRATIVE

S. MARK, VI, 17–28.

THE TETRARCH AND THE BAPTIST

For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her. For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Now Herodias laid snares for him: and was desirous to put him to death and could not. For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man: and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things: and he heard him willingly.

And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birthday, for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee. And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in, and had danced, and pleased Herod, and

them that were at table with him, the king said to the damsel: Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore to her: Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give it thee, though it be the half of my kingdom. Who when she was gone out, said to her mother: What shall I ask? But she said: The head of John the Baptist. And when she was come in immediately with haste to the king, she asked, saying: I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish, the head of John the Baptist. And the king was struck sad. Yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her; but sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish: and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother.

THE TETRARCH AND THE BAPTIST

In the Province of Galilee, to the north-east of Nazareth, and some twenty miles distant from it, within a pear-shaped basin, lies the inland sea of Gennesareth. Wrapt in the arms of a circle of hills, this tideless lake, at the time of which I speak, flowed amid a very garden of loveliness, which in no scant measure it contributed to create. Along the slopes of its western shore were picturesque villas, where Jew and Gentile alike spent hot summers, sailing pleasure boats upon the bosom of those blue waters that danced and sparkled jewel-like in the sun. It was pleasant to shake out sail and run before the wind down to Tiberias, lying to the south-west of the lake. Built upon the slopes of a steep hill, this gorgeous city—Rome and Athens in miniature—was always

astir with some new enterprise or entertainment; for either in the Forum, or in the Stadium, or else in the Theatre there was sure to be some well-advertised novelty to draw and dazzle its sight-seeing visitors. But the centre of attraction in the city was the royal palace, where the Tetrarch, of whom I am going to speak, lived in splendid luxury. Antipas inherited his father's taste for architecture and magnificence, and so, in his resolve to outdo his brother and his famous city Julias, he lived in great style, in the city from which the lake soon borrowed its name—Tiberias.

At the time of which I speak, Antipas Herod had been at home some few years. His early youth had been passed in Rome, but when his father, Herod the Great, died, he returned home, becoming Tetrarch of Galilee. About this time he seems to have married the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian prince, whose capital was at Petra. In one of his subsequent visits to Rome, Antipas and his wife stayed, so it would appear, with his half-brother Philip, whose wife, Herodias, was his own half-niece, a daughter of Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great

and Mariamne. Philip, we are told, had retired to Rome, because, being disinherited by his father, Palestine had ceased to have any attraction for him. Unfortunately, while the Tetrarch Antipas was on this visit to his brother, he lost his heart to Herodias; and, being a man devoid of all principle, living merely to think as he pleased, say as he pleased, and do as he pleased, he soon contrived, by the usual means—the glamour of gifts and the glitter of gold—to draw away from his brother's bosom this ambitious and scheming woman, whose name is associated with one of the foulest murders that ever blackened the page of history.

Having tossed his own wife aside to shift for herself as best she might, the Tetrarch, with the woman Herodias, returned from the Continent to Tiberias, where henceforth they lived together as man and wife, much to the disedification of the people, who were kept in a good humour by the sesterces and games provided for them out of the revenues of this miserable princeling.

It is not clear how long these partners in sin had continued their life of debauchery, luxury, and extravagance,

before they sent the Baptist an invitation to the Golden House. You may ask me why he was invited at all, and you will add, does it not seem strange that it should have even occurred to the minds of such notorious sinners as were Antipas and Herodias, to want to see in their polluted home a man noted for rare and severe sanctity? Yet, it was not so strange after all, for was he not the popular preacher, the friend of the people and the father of the poor? And "John indeed did no miracle," yet he doubtless converted many thousands by the force of his eloquence and sanctity. Worldlings were then what they are to-day, sight-seers. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing."

While then St John, who called himself the "Voice of one crying in the wilderness," was preaching to the multitudes from the text "Bring forth fruit worthy of penance," reminding them: "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree"; warning them that "Every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire," he received a command to attend at the Golden

House. The Baptist, you may be sure, gladly accepted the invitation, for it gave him the opportunity he had been long looking for of denouncing the sin of incest in which the prince was living, and which was a scandal to the whole Tetrarchy.

Meanwhile, Herod and Herodias, with their Court, were looking forward to the spiritual dissipation in store for them. It would be so delightful to see this rugged man, and hear his rugged eloquence, and just for a moment to feel one's wearied and wasted system awakened into new life by the strangely novel sensation—a sermon in the Golden House.

There, then, in its central hall was gathered a brave show of men and women, all expectant to see the preacher and to catch the text of the sermon, about which there had been many a sneer, and many a bet, and many a joke; but they were all out in their reckoning. When men lose sight of God they lose also all sense of proportion, all idea of the fitness of things. Under the circumstances, of course, there was one text and one text only from which the sermon could

be preached by a man of God, and when the Baptist did thunder it forth, exclaiming with outstretched hand, pointing to the throne: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," the company was so little prepared for it, so much taken aback, and so disconcerted by it, that nothing did they say; but before the preacher could reach the peroration of his burning words on the sanctity of the contract of marriage and of the consequences and responsibilities pressing upon those who enter into it, a scene of commotion arose, during which, with gyves upon his wrists, the preacher was hustled out of the Presence Chamber, and marched off to a prison dungeon, where, we are told, Herod would have had him murdered, only he feared the people.

Here, let me ask you, was John's mission then a failure, had he made a mistake in admonishing, quite regardless of consequences, the Tetrarch of Galilee? Judged from the world's point of view, the Baptist had been not merely tactless and impolitic, but he had even committed a gross and egregious blunder, almost deserving the

treatment he received. And you may be quite sure the language used both by the Smart Set of that age, as well as by those who ought to have known better, was precisely what is to be heard now when any poor Priest of God dares to speak in plain, blunt terms against present-day sinfulness in what is called high circles of Society. So long as the Baptist confined his denunciation to the common people, so long as he kept his "cheap clap-trap" oratory about "the axe laid to the root of the trees," about "trees to be cut down and cast into the fire," and about people who "like chaff are to be burned in unquenchable fire," his sermons were, of course, most appropriate, and exactly what were wanted; but when he dared to speak in language quite as plain to people with smarter clothes upon their backs, then his sermons became not only wanting in refinement and good taste, but they even argued a want of education, and betrayed a pitiable lack of breadth of mind; in fact, they became untrue—"You know there are some things so much better left unsaid; there are shortcomings" (marriage brokeries,

infidelities, gambling, etc.), "and peccadillos" (not paying bills, not telling the truth, not going to church), "which no preacher, with a knowledge of what Society always has been, and indeed must be, would dream of referring to in a sermon"—when his audience is made up, not of poor but of rich people, who, by the way, have less excuse for their iniquities than have their less fortunate brothers and sisters in the slums.

No doubt these and similar remarks were made by those who had heard St John's sermon, but more especially by those who had not heard it. How true Society is to itself, it never changes, it is always the same, and its spoilt children are "lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the Lord, which say to the Seers: Prophesy not *unto us* right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of our paths." I often wonder what these worldlings, who like not the truth, think of the Master, Who in clearer, bolder, and blunter terms than even those used by His brave kinsman, warns the rich as well

as the poor: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." And again: "If thy right eye scandalise thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell." Do rich and smart people foolishly imagine it is only common folk who should be prepared to sacrifice what is as precious to them as an eye rather than commit a grievous sin? or do they sinfully as well as foolishly persuade themselves our Lord did not really mean what He really said?

A distinguished Anglican clergyman, in a letter before me, writes: "When I talk to my congregation occasionally about their own sins instead of the sins of the people in the Bible, they resent it, and visit their resentment on me."

I have told you what St John's congregation thought of his sermon preached from the text "*Non licet*";

now let us go on to inquire, what did he himself think about it? The preacher was conscious he had pleased Him Whom alone we always can and ought to please, Jesus Christ; and the luxury of that consciousness was to him, you may be sure, a sort of foretaste of heaven. With the poet he could sing—

> I feel within me
> A peace above all earthly dignities
> A still and quiet conscience——

Though in "the midst of the shadow of death" in a dark, foul, and loathsome dungeon, St John had no fear and no want, for in God he had everything: "I will not fear, for Thou art with me."

And now the scene changes. While the Baptist was in prison, Herod's birthday came round, and Herodias determined to keep it with quite exceptional splendour. Among other items in the day's programme was a banquet to which the princes, the tribunes, and the chief men of the tetrarchy were invited. It was a great day in Tiberias, and before the sun went down the noble city was astir to

watch the procession of chariots and other vehicles drawn by fine horses, as they rattled through the streets and whirled past the castle-gates, bearing guests, gorgeous in colour and brilliant with jewellery, to the birthday festival.

We have had left us no description of the banquet-scene itself, but you may be sure everything that could swim or crawl or fly was sampled and served up at that dinner-table—mullet from the fisheries, pheasants from the forests, venison from the hunting-grounds. Before many courses were over, Asiatic youths, decked out in crimson and gold, trooped noiselessly into the hall, bearing flowers in baskets of silver filigree, fruit in epergnes of burnished gold, perfumes in painted vases, and sherbet and wines in curiously wrought tankards. Presently, when the Tetrarch was flushed with wine, and his guests were merry with much feasting, upon the signal being given, hanging curtains parted slowly from a raised dais at the end of the hall, to disclose the sparingly-draped form of Salome, daughter of Herodias by her real husband, Philip, in a setting

of ferns and palms lit up by coloured lamps. Accompanied by slow voluptuous music from the half-concealed orchestra below, the dancing-girl soon introduced her well-chosen *pas seul* with such telling effect that, before she had reached the wild climax of her passionate theme, the King was captured, being maddened even still more by the dance than by the wine. The scheming mother's device having succeeded, the music slowed down, and the pirouetting girl bowed her acknowledgments. But before the curtain had time to drop, the Tetrarch, giddy with extreme pleasure, sends for the girl, bidding her tell him what love-token she will have from him, swearing to her that if it be half of his kingdom it shall be hers. The child, already carefully schooled by her mother, exultantly cries out: "Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist." A cold shudder passes through the guests, the King's countenance darkens, and for a moment he appears to be afraid of his conscience, afraid of his guests, but, alas! most of all he is afraid of the ballet dancer. Antipas commands that forthwith the girl's

wish shall be gratified, and the head of her enemy be brought up in a charger. Salome, or rather her mother Herodias, has won the plot which her wicked scheming had laid a year before for the head of the man who had dared to tell her the truth about her life of sin. It has proved a complete success. She knew all along, if only she bided her time, she was bound to be triumphant.

Before the music had completely ceased, or the banquet broken up, a guardsman was seen crossing the threshold of the banquet-hall, bearing aloft in a silver charger the head of the Baptist. Seizing the dish in her two hands, the lithesome, sinuous girl trips with it across the stage to her mother, who, taking the head to the footlights, drops it to the ground, exclaiming as she kicks it : "Thus fares the man who dares to teach Herodias."

Let us ring down the curtain upon this ghastly tragedy, careful only to bring away from it the lesson which it teaches. If there be any woman here present who allows any passion to have its way, then I say, remember Herodias ; and if there be any man here present who does not check the beast

within him, then let him remember the Tetrarch.

History repeats itself, and to-day there are women as wicked and as revengeful as Herodias, and to-day there are men as fearful as was Antipas of a ballet dancer; nay, men who are more afraid of a frail girl and her tongue than of God Himself and the judgment to come. What a cowardice is sin, what a servitude; nay, what a slavery! "Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." Fancy! a man, and yet a woman's slave—held by her silken toils, as never chains of iron held a prisoner.

And now let me ask you, on the supposition that the miserable princeling Herod and the wretched woman Herodias were to revisit this planet, what kind of reception think you would they meet with if Mayfair were the chosen quarter for their town residence? They would, doubtless, be cut by the best Society, but they would be received with open arms by the fast Smart Set, and made much of by its guiding stars. It would, you know, be so refreshing to meet those who carry all before them, stopping at

nothing to gratify the fancies with which a bountiful nature had dowered them.

Truth to tell, women with their dainty feet firmly set upon a rung high up the social ladder are easily condoned those deadly deeds for which their sisters lower down would be sure to be severely condemned. Accordingly, Herodias, with a past, would stand out prominently as a really smart woman of the Smart Set. Provided she and Herod gave good dinners and rare entertainments there would be no difficulty in finding excuses for their actual life of incest. That world for which our Lord would not pray, speaking of the filthy pair, would say: "When you see them together, so suited and so happy, it is quite impossible to think that the Almighty could wish to shatter what, after all, is nothing but a beautiful soul-union! We feel sure, in spite of what priests may say to the contrary, that a God Who is Love could never wish anyone to be so miserable as they both were till they met one another and married. And after all, there is no scandal about them now; they are, we feel sure,

models to us all, and we only wish other people were as nice."

Alas! London's West End, littered with broken vows, has ready to hand excuses for any or all of the seven deadly sins; while at the divorce courts some three hundred traitors to their troth are actually now pleading piteously to be relieved in this world from what God will not relieve them in the next. I do not say these traitors are members of the Smart Set; as a matter of fact, divorce is not, they will tell you, their "form." They arrange matters, saying: "Do not let us get into the divorce court; it is vulgar; let us have no public scandal, it is so middle-class."

There is no language to express the thrill of horror which, as a Christian gentleman, I feel when I pause to reflect upon the consequences to my dear country, even England, of the ideas now in vogue among fast married people about married life. Is it not appalling to think that the very last thing for newly-married people to want is mutual love? Nay, they ridicule belief in any such old-world relic. It is "bad form," and that is the end of

it. It is not one another's persons but one another's things that are, nowadays, worshipped. They put their trust in hard cash, but have no faith in real love. If ever there has been any such thing in the past, it is quite certain there is none now. I myself have more than once heard a girl exclaim: "If ever I do marry, be sure it will be someone I do not care about; to marry a man one likes means breaking one's heart." While men, when I beg of them to settle down, tell me it is their wish to do so, but it is useless to think of it with the extravagant ideas that girls have about dress and pleasure, and with the strange ideas they possess of the married state and its responsibilities.

Wedded life being started, as so often it is, with no blessing, but, on the contrary, with the curse of God upon it, goes on from bad to worse, husband and wife having each their own way, drifting farther and farther apart, till at last, in extreme cases, divorce begins with the legal form, "restitution of conjugal rights."

When married people pervert the end for which the "great sacrament"

was instituted by God, and dictate to Him the terms on which they are going to live under the same roof, determining the number of their offspring without reference to His Will, they are preparing an evil day for themselves, and, what is worse, are setting evil examples to their fellow-countrymen. Surely luxurious living is sin gross enough without any addition to it by which to lower the birth-rate of our country.

What changes have come to pass during the last half century in the social world! I can look back to a day in my early boyhood when, while riding across country with my father, suddenly he drew rein, and, pointing to the richly-timbered scene before us, said: "All that was once part of the estate, but it went bit by bit for not conforming; now it is Crown land." And he went on to say: "God has more than made up to us for this loss, for, instead of large estates He has given us large families." I am proud to think that, if my father was one of twenty children, I myself am one of fourteen. My experience goes to show that the larger the family the healthier and

merrier the children. Present up-to-date parents ridicule the notion of having big families; so that instead of being proud, Society is becoming ashamed of owning to a nursery full of children. In a sense, it may be a blessing, for what with club-life and club-habits and club-morality, there is little or no time for a mother to look to her one and only child, which, of course, she neither feeds nor even sees, except perhaps at tea-time, when it is brought down to show off its fine clothes.

The state of things which is coming too much into fashion, and which a considerable amount of the current literature read by idle people does its very best to encourage and foster, means, within a measurable distance of time, the extinction of Christian morality and of the Christian religion in England. Among Catholics, of course, the vile practices to which I refer can never find many followers, for the simple reason that the Church will not admit to the Sacraments anyone who does not recognise and follow the laws of God respecting the sacred and inviolable character of the married state.

But outside the pale of the Church the laws regulating married life in the Christian dispensation are becoming more and more widely ignored, at home as well as abroad. Nowadays, young persons about to contract the marriage tie determine the number of the children they will have in much the same business-like way as they settle how many servants they propose to keep. To be the means, under God, of bringing a larger family into the world than they can conveniently provide for, they will calmly tell you is not only cruel, but is even wicked. But should there be ample means forthcoming, they will then proceed to tell you that there are personal considerations altogether independent of fortune that go to regulate what the world calls a well-ordered married life. Accordingly, they urge the claims of personal health, the claims of personal convenience, or the claims of Society, or even of fashion itself, as altogether sufficient in support of their contention, that it is the business of husband and wife, or both, or of either, and not of the Creator and Redeemer, to settle the momentous question about

the nursery, and the number of children to be allowed in it.

What does this defiance of God, this destructive philosophy of life mean? We all know that the empty cradle must, in very many cases, mean the empty home, while the empty home will be followed, sooner or later, by the empty Church.

When husband and wife, as they please to call themselves, deliberately, and in defiance of God's Will made known to them, snap the golden chain which links each to each, and both to His Throne Divine, they break, at the same moment, that tie of reverence for each other, which, when the love-fires begin to burn low, as they must do sooner or later, is meant to hold them in the bonds of a closer spiritual union. Say what they may, but these outrages against the great sacrament cannot altogether silence the voice of conscience. This voice reminds them that they are traitors to an all-important clause in the sacred contract, which they called upon God to witness they meant to keep, when amid so much pomp and circumstance they entered upon their engagements.

It is impossible for Christians, in any walk of life, to pretend they can persuade themselves that when once they become married, they may, with impunity, thwart God's designs in them by the illicit exercise of certain rites, or by the illicit employment of certain devices.

How long will persons, who resort to such practices as fling defiance at the face of God, remain faithful to each other without His grace, which they have ceaselessly tossed aside, I know not; but what I do know is this, that when once they have taken their lives into their own hands, themselves determining the conditions on which they will bear the burden of the married state, they will not then be long in discovering that there is no longer any supernatural motive for their going to church. Nay, more, they will want to turn their backs upon the place which can only serve to remind them of pledges broken, and of lives defiled. Here, during the brief hours allotted them for winning, by the faithful discharge of sacred duties and high responsibilities, a throne of eternal glory and a crown of unfading roses, they may, indeed, continue their

life of riot, flattering themselves that they have reasons all-sufficient for regarding it as a life well-regulated by prudence; but when this life is done, and they come to stand face to face with the God Who made them, they will, I much fear, discover to their eternal shame, that what the world had told them was a married life, was, as a matter of fact, nothing more nor less than a life of legalised prostitution. The so-called wedded life to which I have referred is, and must be, in God's sight, nothing else, if the Gospel has any meaning. Then woe to them who shall have defiled their lives in it.

Not many days ago a leading physician with a very large practice, called me aside at a public meeting, and introducing himself, he urged me, whilst I was preaching this course of sermons, to denounce, with all vehemence, the illicit use of marriage, which, he said, was becoming far too general in this country. When I asked him whether the matter had come within his own cognizance he said: "I assure you I could very considerably add to my yearly income, if only I would countenance and recog-

nise these practices that have been imported within recent years into this country."

O my Island Home! O my Mother Country! How hast thou fallen from thy high purposes! How hast thou come to forget thy calling among the nations "to be the joyful mother of children?"

Are we, then, returning to the day of Roman decadence, when so-called civilisation had reached its highest point in paganism—a period which historians call the palmy days of civilisation? Alas! it was an age when the indissoluble character of wedded life was utterly ignored, when its duty to the race was regarded as an intolerable burden to be cast off, like chains of slavery, for the licence of free men. Hence, in the reign of Augustus, the very highest and noblest families were dying out for want of heirs, while the lower orders were desolating whole provinces, and Rome itself, by their practice of self-inflicted extinction.

I wish I did not read, in the story of our own times, so many chapters recalling Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"; but when these

points of resemblance are so striking, what student of history can escape noting them? What is going to become of England, once known as the "land of beautiful homes?" Home, we are told, is the place of peace, "the shelter not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head, the glow-worm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot, but Home is yet wherever she is, and for a noble woman it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion, shedding its quiet light for those who else were homeless!"

Oh, for another Arthur to rise in the soul of my countrymen for what saith he?—

I know
Of no more subtle motive under heaven
Than is a maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But to teach high thoughts and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth and all that makes a man.

"We want men," said one of his generals to the great Napoleon.

"No," replied the Emperor, "we want mothers." Observe well, it is not the hand which rocks the empty cradle that rules the world, but the hand which empties the cradle to find room for yet another "man born into the world."

Let the best amongst us take warning from what we know, not only of the fall and ruin of Rome but also of the lives of Herod and Herodias. What a man! What a woman! They have both gone to their account, but I have said that were they to revisit the earth and to appear in London, they would be flooded with more invitations than ever had been theirs during their reign at Tiberias. Does not this state of Society argue that there is something rotten in England? Do not shut your eyes to the fact, for fact it is. The law courts, criminal and civil, and most of all the divorce court, all reveal this to us as an actuality; and so do certain plays that poison the after-dinner evenings; and so do certain novels which supply the night's bad dreams. It is the same thing that always happens where there is apostacy from God, where God's law,

whether in single or married life, in social or national life, is not recognised and followed. It happened to the Romans, for are we not told "God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their bodies among themselves?" And does not the Apostle in his straight, strong language, which would be condemned in these days of tolerance, remind the decadent Romans, in this same letter to them, that this happened because "they worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever." Yes; and he goes on to say: "For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections. For their women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature. And in like manner the men also."

O my decadent country, even England, remember Rome! O my fellow countrymen! hear, with bated breath, the Apostle's concluding word about the Romans. "As they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do these things which are not convenient;" and note, "they who do such things

are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them." Cry out, each one of you, as you hear this Apostolic warning—

> And oh! for a man to arise in me,
> That the man that I am may cease to be.

Pope Pius X, than whom no one has a better opportunity of knowing, has reminded us that the disease from which the social organism is suffering in this twentieth century is the same disease as proved fatal to the Roman Empire—apostacy from God. This Apostolic Pope, speaking upon this subject, says: "We are terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human Society to-day. For who can fail to see that Society is, at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady, which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction. This disease is apostacy from God, than which nothing is more allied to ruin; for, behold, 'They that go from Thee shall perish.'"

It is a blessing to recognise what it

is that is poisoning the Christian life of Europe. If it is apostacy from God, let us, without delay, return to Him and to His laws. Let us say with the Christ's Vicar in the Vatican : " We take courage in Him Who strengthens us ; and, setting ourselves to work, we proclaim that we have no other programme but that of ' restoring all things in Christ, so that Christ may be all and in all. His interests shall be our interests, and for these we are resolved to spend all our strength, and if need be our life.' "

My brethren, one thing is most certain, Jesus is our Saviour : " Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

O come to the merciful Saviour Who calls you,
O come to the Lord Who forgives and forgets ;
Though dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,
There's a bright home above where the sun never sets.

Then come to His feet, and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame ;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of the Lord to be true to His Name.

THE SAVIOUR AND THE SINNER

THE NARRATIVE

S. LUKE VII, 36–50

THE SAVIOUR AND THE SINNER

And one of the Pharisees desired Him to eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat.

And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee, who had invited Him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying: This man, if He were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said to him: Simon,

I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said: Master, say it.

A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most? Simon answering said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My Feet; but she with tears hath washed My Feet, and with her hairs hath wiped Them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My Feet. My Head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My Feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace.

THE SAVIOUR AND THE SINNER

If I were asked to draw up from the Gospel story a set of arguments in proof of our dear and blessed Lord's Divinity, most certainly I should find a place for His all-marvellous love of sinners, as well as for His all-gracious invitation to suffering humanity to come to Him in the hour of its direst distress for comfort, strength, and rest. And should the objection be raised that it is characteristic of all godly men to feel for sinners sympathy, and to offer the heavy-laden rest, my retort would be: it is true, indeed, a Christian's love of sinners may safely be gauged by his devotedness to Christ, while his efforts to relieve the sorrow-stricken will be no less in the measure of the mercy learned from His Divine Example; but though this be true, it is no less true to add, it is just then, when

most we want to help others that we begin to realise how miserably poor and paltry—almost worthless—is all we have to offer.

On such an occasion our Lord seems to say to us with fuller meaning than ever before : " Without Me you can do nothing."

We can only lend to others what we borrow from Him. Natures differ ; some people, seemingly, have no more power than a well-seasoned plank in a timber-yard of giving sympathy, while from others, it streams forth like light and heat from the sun, the very atmosphere in which they live pulsating with it. It is a beautiful God-given gift, and where it is sanctified by contact with Jesus Christ, it becomes almost sacramental in its working.

For this reason with the poet we urge the Christian waytarer to ask, not for " riches nor for the glow of greatness," but, as he puts it—

Ask God to give thee grace in comfort's art,
That thou may'st consecrated be and set apart
Unto a life of sympathy ;
For heavy is the weight of woe in every heart,
And comforters are needed much,
Of Christ-like touch.

Not only does our Lord measure as no one else can do, accurately and precisely, "the weight of woe in every heart," but where He does not lighten that weight, He always, when asked, dowers the soul with strength to bear it; and where the burden is a sin-burden, He relieves the soul of it by Himself "bearing our iniquities, carrying our grief."

No one but the God-man could possibly deal with sinners as He does, and no one, who is not All-power as well as All-mercy, could send, echoing down this vale of tears, the invitation, "Come to Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

To call sinners to repentance, to bring them back to the sunshine of His presence from the darkness of night, is the very meaning of the great mystery of the Incarnation. Did He not come in the likeness of sinful flesh to call sinners, to befriend sinners, to purify sinners, to save sinners? If there is one name above all others dear to Him, it is that of "the Sinner's Friend." Who has ever loved sinners as He does? or who so ingenious as He

in framing excuses for them, or in discovering ways of winning them to Himself?

I might illustrate from His dealing with Peter after his denial, or with Judas after his treason, or with the thief upon the cross, His all-absorbing love of sinners; but for the moment I will leave these pathetic examples, in order to put before you our Lord's tender and beautiful treatment of a woman who was taken in the act of sin; of a woman who was living in sin; and thirdly, of a woman who had been living in sin. These instances of our Lord's love of sinners will encourage us, who are sin-burdened as well as sin-stained, to throw ourselves upon His mercy, not only with hearts contrite and humble, but with hearts trusting to Him absolutely and entirely.

You remember that shortly before His Sacred Passion our Lord was in the Temple when "all the people came to Him, and sitting down He taught them." Suddenly there was an interruption caused by a party of Scribes and Pharisees who, loudly shouting and wildly gesticulating,

were dragging across the Temple floor a woman almost beside herself in the agony of her shame. Before they had time to reach Him they began to scream out their charge against her: "Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one, but what sayest Thou?"

There is no time to dwell upon the wicked shamelessness of these men, whose sin, to my thinking, was far greater than that of the fallen woman in their clutches, but I do want to draw your attention both to the attitude taken by the Sinner's Friend, as well as to the wording of His noble defence of that unfortunate girl, more sinned against than sinning. We are told that "Jesus bowing Himself down wrote with His finger on the ground"—what was it, think you, that he wrote upon the sandy surface—"that the incoming tide of repentance" might presently sweep it forever away? Perhaps the accusers of the poor prostitute, as they bent over the written word read—each one of them—the character of his own predominant passion. Whether it was so with cer-

tainty, I know not, but this we know, that each one of those shameless creatures, after having seen that writing, was flung back upon his own conscience, so that when the Sinner's Advocate rose to His full height and turned to them, saying: "He that is without sin let him first cast a stone at her," they began, every one of them, to slink away from the Divine Presence, till at last the poor girl found herself standing face to face with Jesus, Who in tones of pity and of sorrow said to her: "Woman, where are they that accused thee; hath no man condemned thee?" to which she whispers, "No man, Lord."

And now at this point of the interview comes the Divine word of healing, to which I wish most especially to call your attention.

Observe, our Saviour with a delicacy, a refinement, and a sympathy that we cannot too much admire, did not even mention the gross character of the sin from which she had only now been dragged forth, nor did He even express His sense of horror at it, still less of her. Oh, what a relief to that woman's tortured soul must have been

that gracious verdict of acquittal: "Neither will I condemn thee, go now and sin no more."

It is not our Divine Lord's mission, nor is it His wish to pass sentence of condemnation upon sinners. That work He leaves to the voice of conscience, to which He bids the sinner give heed, for that monitor tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Conscience is God's delegate speaking to the soul.

It is when the sinner acknowledges the sin, and is sorry for it, that Jesus comes in, lifting an absolving hand whilst He pronounces the words: "Go now and sin no more." Who could fall again after meeting with love so sympathetic as this? What a revelation to that poor girl was the tender love of the Sacred Heart. What a new life full of hope He had put into her famished soul!

And now let me introduce to your notice my second example illustrating our Saviour's love of sinners. The story is told by St John. One spring morning when the sun was beating fiercely upon the wheat-fields of

Samaria, Jesus, drawing near to Sychar, being wearied with His journey, paused to rest Himself beside Jacob's Well while His disciples "were gone away into the city to buy meat." While He sat "thus on the well," a woman of Samaria came to draw water.

I am not going to give you the whole of the conversation that took place between our Lord and that woman, but I cannot help drawing your attention to one or two points in it, because they are full of spiritual significance. For instance, when our Lord said: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," He surely meant to remind you and me, no matter at what love-fountain we may seek to slake our love-thirst, that there is absolutely none outside the stream gushing forth from His own Heart with which the fever agony can be satisfied. Again, when Jesus went on to say to her: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saidst to thee 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water," He surely intended us to

realise more fully our own want of due appreciation of the many spiritual gifts which might be ours for the asking? We are for ever seeking "vain things," saying, "Give me but this or that, and I shall be for ever happy"; and yet, when our desire is given us, we forthwith begin to feel the want of something else. "If thou didst but know"—

> All passing beauty is a pledge
> Of beauty in its plenitude:
> Plenitude be theirs
> Who look above.

Let me again call your attention to what, for want of a better word, I must call our Lord's infinite tact in dealing with the Samaritan woman's most complex case. Behold here a woman, who, in course of conversation, tells Jesus she has no husband, implying thereby she is living in sin. Jesus said unto her: "Thou hast well said 'I have no husband,' for thou hast had five husbands, but he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Observe, our Lord does not Himself pronounce any sentence of condemnation; he deals with this Samaritan woman beside the well as he did with the

prostitute brought to Him in the Temple; He refers her to her conscience, warning her to follow the direction of that interior and infallible director. It is not for Him to step into court and to sit in judgment before the Judgment Day. When conscience shall have fulfilled its mission, our Lord will then, upon the evidence given at the Great Assize, reward or punish every sinner that comes before Him.

Are we not, some of us, at times only too much disposed to bribe conscience, to gag conscience, to drug conscience, or else to misinterpret conscience? For instance, when people become too closely intimate with those with whom they have no right to be on such terms of affection, is it not habitual with them to cast about for what they are pleased to call "very good reasons" for what, in the language of the Gospel, is a life of sin? Unblushingly they will tell you that it cannot be very wrong "to be human," that it is, indeed, true they were once bound themselves by marriage bonds, but inasmuch as the party with whom they had made the contract has failed to fulfil his part of it, they consider that they themselves are now

free to act in the way they please ; or, perhaps, they will tell you complacently that they have become essential to the happiness of someone whom it would be criminal as well as cruel now to toss aside at the bidding of a mere scruple of conscience. I might go on enumerating the "very good reasons" which sinners, practically driven mad by indulgence in passion, evolve out of their inner consciousness with the object of confounding or silencing the voice of God speaking to them through conscience.

> His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Would to God that there were many more of us ready, like the Samaritan woman, to take action with a high hand against those passions which bring no real peace in life while, like devils, they haunt their victims in the hour of death.

This Samaritan, a mere stranger, evidently touched by our Lord's tender sympathy, took His advice and repaired her past life of recklessness by becoming a very apostle of His cause at Sychar. Perhaps the so-called husband from

whom she tore herself at the Master's bidding, threatened to take her life or his own, but she had experience enough of men to know that they who actually do these deeds are not the persons who swear in the presence of others they are going to commit them.

And now to pass from the woman of Sychar to one who went by the name of "the woman in the city that was a sinner." It is the case of the Magdalen. Tradition says that while yet a mere girl she was married to one Pappus, who, growing jealous of her, finally deserted her, and that it was then when her life, lonely and blighted, craved for sympathy, that she became entangled with Pandera, an officer of Magdala. What this tradition is worth, we have no means of knowing with any certainty; but this much we do know, that St John, speaking of her at the time to which I refer, calls her "a sinner," and the word which he uses, coupled with the tradition of her extreme beauty and of her profligacy, which has come down to us from Talmudist and Christian writers alike, as well as the whole setting of the

beautiful and touching story of her conversion at the feet of our Saviour, seem to leave no doubt as to the true character of the sin which was pardoned in the house of Simon the Pharisee. It was while Magdalen was playing the part of a gay woman in Naim, while she was vainly seeking—like so many others before and since her time—to satisfy her soul with the Dead Sea fruit of sin, that she came upon the path of the sinner's best Friend. She saw Jesus, and she heard Him. And, as she listened to the marvellous invitation "to all that labour and are burdened" to come to Him, she felt she was in the presence of One Who compelled her to look at everything in life from His point of view. Sin, of which she had reckoned so little hitherto, which she had come to look upon almost as a necessity of life; sin, which she had so often made merry over, or dressed out in fine phrases, or used to season a joke; sin grew before the eyes of her soul into a shape, monstrous, horrible, detestable. Our Lord's words had stripped all its disguises away, and she saw it as God sees it—as it is. With horror she looked back upon the

last years of her life, upon what women call their "successes." And she began to realise that apart from God there is no such thing as lasting success, while doing and bearing the will of God can never really mean failure. As she paused to reflect how she had shaped her later years to shun the blame and win the praise of men, it came home to her that from God's point of view, which is the only point from which to see things as they really are, what was the true value of the praise or blame of the world. The difference between them, so it seemed to her now, was the difference between a south-west and a north-east wind; one was smooth and soft, the other rough and harsh, but both were only wind, "A breath can make them as a breath has made."

Here let us for a moment pause to study our Saviour's attitude towards the City Sinner when He finds her at Simon's feast kneeling beside His feet. The board is spread with rare viands and costly wines, with fragrant flowers and luscious fruit, when Simon, conducting his guests to the supper-room, bids them take their appointed places,

and recline on the couches set around the tables. Presently swarthy slaves pass noiselessly to and fro in attendance on the guests, with movements as graceful and measured as if they were pacing to the music of the half-concealed orchestra, while the townsfolk and the unbidden onlookers, now that the banquet has begun, distribute themselves where best they may in order to gratify their curiosity to the full.

Meanwhile, a woman, to the intense indignation of Simon, appears on the scene and glides, almost like one walking in her sleep, across the length of the room. Pre-occupied, seemingly, by some overpowering thought, the Sinner exchanges glances with no one, but is borne onward past them all till she reaches the couch from which the feet of the Divine Guest are turned towards her. There, trembling with emotion, she pauses, her eyes riveted on the sacred feet so often wearied in the pursuit of sinners. As she gazes, big hot tears, like the first drops of a summer storm, begin to fall upon those unsandalled harbingers of peace. Broken with grief, the Magdalen sinks to her knees, and as she does so her

unloosed hair, like a silken veil, falls over her, concealing from the rude gaze of Simon's guests her sorrow and her shame.

Then at last, from the full fountain of her heart, gushes over her Saviour's holy feet the unchecked stream of sorrow-burning, contrite tears, which, with her long, flowing hair she strives to wipe away, vainly, again and again. And still, as she washes those feet with her tears, and wipes them with her hair, she almost fancies that she can read written upon them the awful story of her past life — its rebellion, its treachery, its treason against the majesty of her only true Friend, her Saviour, her God. Ah! what an agony it is to her! How can she undo what has been already done; how shall she blot out these sin-stains upon the feet of Him, the Sinless One? What would she not give to wipe out from her own soul that history, the thought of which pierces her through and through with the keenest pangs of remorse? Drawing from her bosom the alabaster box of precious ointment, she empties its sweet-scented contents over those beautiful feet, which have been a mag-

net to her soul, attracting her so gently ; while from her heart she utters a prayer that this sweet nard, pressed out of God's sinless creation, may in mystic symbol sweeten her life's bitter past, and blot out all its stains. Ah ! that she had never offended Him from Whose presence she now feels a virtue going forth, transforming her, steeping her soul in a calm she has never known before.

Is it the echo of the songs of angels rejoicing over her penitence that she seems to hear as she next ventures, with trembling hands, to lay hold of His feet, and with cleansed lips adores and kisses them again and again, with love chastened by sorrow ? By what name to call this new life which thrilled her through and through Magdalen knew not ; all that she knew was this, that her bold act of faith was now more than rewarded, her hope more than realised, and her love more than satisfied at the feet of Him Who had said : " Come to Me ye who are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." She had come ; she had been refreshed.

Meanwhile, no word had been spoken.

Magdalen's heart was too full of emotion to utter a word ; our Lord's heart was too full of compassion to speak ; while Simon's heart was too full of what he considered righteous indignation to allow him to break silence. Presently, however, the Sinner's Friend, from Whom no thought or emotion can escape notice, addresses Himself on Magdalen's behalf to His host. Pointing to the graceful and beautiful figure bent over His Sacred Feet, He says to the Pharisee, "Simon, dost thou see this woman ? I entered into thy house and thou gavest Me no water for My Feet ; but she with tears hath washed My Feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss ; but she since she came in hath not ceased to kiss My Feet. My Head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but she with ointment hath anointed My Feet. Wherefore I say to thee, many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much."

Perhaps someone here present may feel disposed to ask me wherein did Magdalen show so much love of Jesus Christ ? Well, she proved her love by the tears shed over her past sins,

she proved her love by giving up her past associates, she proved her love by her ministry at the Feet of her Saviour, and she proved her love most of all by the generous sacrifice she makes of everything and everybody that stood between her and her dear Lord.

What a new experience it was to her to discover for the first time that real love means service, while service in its highest sense is self-sacrifice. Hitherto she had only known love as another name for self-gratification, and certainly her experience went to show that those who professed eternal devotion to her counted love rather by what they got from, than from what they gave to her.

> That is not love whose tyranny we own
> In loveliness that every moment dies:
> True love is that which the pure heart hath known,
> Which alters not with time or death's decay,
> Yielding on earth earnest of Paradise.

Magdalen's was a beautiful conversion, the example of her penitence having, I venture to say, brought many more souls to the Feet of Jesus Christ than even her profligacy had drawn away from them.

For a moment let me exhort you not to be taken by surprise should you happen to come upon the pathway of some human being whose very presence seems to charge the surrounding atmosphere with a magnetism which threatens to rob you of that will-strength in which resides resistance to all that actually is or may become evil. When these occasions arise, they are, I take it, test trials of our love and loyalty to Jesus Christ. They who have never known what it is to feel almost paralysed by some such creature have yet to learn the meaning of the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." If it is to be our privilege to offer Jesus Christ the best thing that we have to give, we must form character, and this can only be done at a cost which to flesh and blood is terrible even to contemplate. But it must be done, and that is the end of it. Take courage in the words: "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for when he shall have been tried, he shall receive the reward which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

It is a great mistake for worldlings to think there are two kinds of sanctity. There is only one kind, the difference between the novice and the proficient being a question only of degree and not of kind.

You can only conquer, as Napoleon used to say, by replacing ; and the best way for any of us to conquer an inordinate attachment to any merely human person is by filling his heart with an enthusiastic love of the Divine Person, Jesus Christ, while to maintain this passionate enthusiasm for Him, he must be prepared to sacrifice ruthlessly whatsoever stands between himself and Christ.

> Measure thy life by loss and not by gain,
> Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth:
> For love's service standeth in love's sacrifice,
> And whoso suffers most has most to give.

If this be true of all love, most especially so is it of our Christ-love. He will have all or none.

Believing, as I sincerely do, the truth of what I have been saying, my heart simply bleeds to think how little our Divine Lord is really loved and worshipped as God in England to-day. If we really believed in His claims,

surely such an Education Bill as the one at present being discussed would be an absolute impossibility. In fact it would be no easy matter to find a Christian Englishman to frame it, for to ask him to do so would be like asking him to profess treason to Jesus Christ the Divine. Alas! it would seem that there are in our midst those who want a Christianity without dogma, which is euphemistic for Christianity without Christ. But let me remind you without Christ you are without a Saviour, and without a Saviour your life becomes chaos and your end ruin.

Where there is no Christ there is no true model of Christian virtue, no Divine Archetype before Whom we may sit down, with the object of copying into our own lives a perfected divine likeness.

Compared even with the three women to whom I have referred; for instance, with Magdalen, what hope to-day has a girl of worldly parents of developing a virtuous life formed and fashioned upon Christian principles? Has she known anything of those beautiful influences which a child ought to ex-

perience from contact with its mother ? A child's first schoolroom ought to be its mother's arms, wherein it should imbibe all that is needed for the sustenance and development, not of its body only, but of its soul also. Moulded by the mother, the child has every chance, later on, under conscientious governesses, and then under finishing masters, of turning out a character worthy of her station in life and of her Christian country. But a girl of the class to which I refer is not taught to know our Divine Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. When on stated occasions she does come from the nursery downstairs is it to leap into her mother's arms where she will be shown some image of Christ or told some story of His love ? ; or is it to climb her father's knee when he will have ready for her some Gospel picture, or, perhaps, some beautiful legend of a saint ? ; or is she only called down to show off her fine curls or her still finer clothes ? Alas ! the opportunities so plentiful and bountiful which God in His goodness gives to parents in Society for drawing out the hidden beauties in the soul of their child, are altogether neglected, so that she grows up with the

spiritual side of her character utterly uncultivated. It is as soil untilled. She may be accomplished in some of the natural graces of life, it may be her boast that her finishing lessons, say, in drawing or music or singing have been under the best masters of the day, she may be well versed, if not too well, in the romance literature of Germany and France, but tell me, what help will she find in these accomplishments when, later on, her virtue shall be put to the test, when her heart, a very "furnace of living pain," shall cry for strength and courage not to yield to the terrible temptations that beset the paths of so many of us? They will be as useless to lean upon as broken reeds.

In the artificial life which a brilliant pagan civilisation evolves, we must, of course, expect to find that the arts of the milliner and modiste receive quite exceptional patronage. It is not what women put on, but what they take off, that matters. There are not a few houses from which some Society ladies are permanently excluded because of their want of decent clothing. Did we know less of the motives for these outrageous breaches of decorum, we

might charitably suppose these unwomenly women were recent importations from the Fiji Islands, but being what they are, and what we know them to be, there is no excuse for their insults upon civilisation—they must be mad, and should be treated like other persons incapable of managing their own affairs. Far be it from me to find fault with smart women for wearing smart gowns and smart "things," as they call them, because the handsomer and more elaborate the frock the more numerous the hands employed in making it, and therefore the wider the circulation of the money due, and alas! often "still due," in payment of it. I know dressmakers who have not yet been paid for fashionable gowns which have been ordered, bought, worn, cast off, and then sold by "real ladies" moving in Society. What is more utterly disgraceful still is that these dressmakers who receive little or no credit from silk houses with which they deal dare not press their clients for payment, for if they did venture to do so, not only would they never get paid by those particular clients, but they would also lose a host of other customers who would

be told such damaging stories about the firm as might bring about its failure and ruin. Nor do I find fault with women for making use of artificial aids to beauty since these things, like flowers and jewellery, and even conversations and manners, do not make pretence of being anything more than artificial. No one is taken in by these arts, or rather these tricks of fashion. Once you cross the threshold of Society, you know, with the poet, "things are not what they seem;" no, nor persons either.

But to return to my Magdalen whose parents I will suppose are merely in the vestibule of the enchanted castle wherein dwells the fast Smart Set. They have taken a house in Mayfair for the season when their girl is coming out. Of course superhuman efforts are made by them to cross the threshold where they may be seen amongst Smart People. If their desperate struggle to put in an appearance where they are not wanted fails, they fall back upon a little device which, if they are as clever as they are vulgar, is bound to secure for them the notoriety, if not the society, they want. They decide to give a small dance at home, and money,

being no consideration, gladly they pay £2000 for supper, £3000 for flowers, and £4000 for guests. I can remember the old-fashioned days when we hired chairs for the guests, nowadays we hire guests for the chairs. In due course the guests arrive, charmed with the blaze of light, with the tangle of colour, but delighted still more with the '92 Pommery and quails in aspic. But if the *débutante* daughter receives scant attention from the hired guests, the host and hostess receive still less. It is, you know, Lady So-and-so who has arranged the little party, issued the invitations, and pocketed the heavy commission, and so it is she who receives her friends, while the host, by whom the bill for it all is paid, is treated much as if he were but a head waiter. Is it not sad to see how men and women made for heaven will lick the very dust off the floor to have their names, and their names only, associated with hired guests who do not want to know them! But rich vulgar people seem to take it all as a matter of course, and so, when on the day following the expensive guzzle they meet in the Park those who on the previous evening

partook of their hospitality, they do not appear to be in any way disconcerted with being cut or snubbed by them. They go home and begin all over again in the hope of better success next time. And what, pray, is the next move? Most probably it takes the form of a large cheque to their political party or to some public institution, on the distinct understanding that their names shall be included in the next list of honours. At last they succeed. Strange to say, they are pretty sure to tell you the title bestowed was none of their seeking, that it was literally forced upon them, and that the only reason that induced them to take it was the fact that their name appeared on a list so different from any previous one—the people chosen this time being nearly all of them persons as well-born as they were well-known. Nothing, perhaps, has done more to break up the fine old traditions of our English nobility and aristocracy than this vulgar influx of vulgar people, whose only merit is their wealth which, from all accounts, has not always been very meritoriously made.

Meanwhile, the *débutante* daughter

has to get married, and married, of course, to some one highly connected. The girl, wearied to death with the incessant round of frivolities that go to make up a London Season, is only too anxious to settle down to wedded life, for her jaded appetite has already ceased to relish frivolous books, frivolous plays, and frivolous people. She feels within her a craving for she scarcely knows what, but it is for something not yet tasted, for some fountain that will slake her thirst for happiness, for some delicious fruit that will satisfy, if only for a time, her hunger to love as well as to be loved. She wonders within herself if there can be any religion capable of calming and soothing a famished soul, giving it real refreshment. She remembers, perhaps, how one man had talked cleverly to her about Buddhism, and another of Catholicism, and she can even call to mind how pious she once fancied she felt when she happened to be with a friend at Benediction in the Oratory. But she was assured that the delicious feeling was due really to the blend of incense and flowers, together with the inspiring choir of boy

voices that melted with the deep notes of the organ. After all, she argues, there cannot be really much in religion, otherwise it would surely be more in demand than it is. No one among her girl or men friends seemed to have any, nor can she remember ever seeing them in church unless on the occasion of a wedding in town, or of a flower service or harvest-thanksgiving in the country. Anyhow, one thing is clear, that with the exception of Catholic services, all others are regarded by her set as insufferably dull, and so it becomes one's duty to shun them.

We will suppose a marriage is arranged for her, and that the engagement is announced in society journals as "most appropriate," "suitable," and "happy," while in due course she becomes the recipient of presents both "numerous and costly." She tries to persuade herself that she really is happy, and yet she cannot help thinking she could be more sure of it if only there were some mutual link between herself and her *fiancé*—and that, alas, is wanting. As a matter of fact, she knows that she has been flung at him, and that he has closed with the bribe

because he wants, not her love, but her money.

Wedded life, started on these lines, has not much prospect of success. Instead of bridegroom and bride finding in each other what is wanted to complete life, they each go their own way, drifting farther and farther apart, till in place of mutual love or mutual reverence there arises between them mutual repulsion. We will suppose there happens, in this case, what so often occurs—the young wife meets the man whom she feels she ought to have married. Instead of springing away from each other they become too intimate, while she perhaps even thanks God because at last she has found someone worth living for. But of course illicit affection seldom lasts ; it cannot ; the object of her inordinate love is called away perhaps on service abroad, and glad he is of the excuse of shaking her off and becoming free, for, truth to tell, he has tired of her. The unfortunate girl, on the contrary, who has emptied upon the base creature the full tide of her love, is now completely broken down. The separation seems to tear the very life out of her being, leaving

her in so critical a condition that the doctor, who knows all, orders her to be kept quiet and under constant supervision. He fears that under the strain her mind may give way, and then, beyond self-control, the worst will happen. Let us suppose that the unfortunate woman, under skilful nursing, recovers her health sufficiently for her to move into the country. But life has ceased for her ; it has passed, as she expresses it, from heaven to hell. Her husband is she knows not where, and provided he never more darkens her door, she cares less ; while her child in the nursery is, she says, best there, for its presence is a torment to her.

What a restless, feverish state is hers ! Poor girl, there is nothing to distract her mind, which is always set in the same direction. She yearns to be gone, to follow the object of her love. There is nothing left on earth to interest her, not books, nor flowers, nor frocks, nor people ; they have all alike lost their charm and very meaning, no longer appealing to her poor stricken heart. Like one walking in her sleep, the very eyes of her body, as those of her soul, show a far-away

longing; she lives not where she is, but where she loves; she protests she will see no one and go nowhere, but stays at home and continues to hug her grief, declaring that her misery is more than she can endure, and that soon she will have done with it. The long and lonely nights, when they are not spent in floods of tears, are tormented by horrid dreams, induced by the sleeping draughts that leave her, after fitful slumber, more depressed and desolate than ever. She wonders why ever she was born, why the infinite yearnings, cravings in her being, were sent her if they were to be denied the only thing they wanted. If there be a God at all, how cruel and tyrannical of Him to create appetites in her soul which He will not satisfy. Why did He draw forth her hands to pluck at fruit which eluded her grasp; why did He offer to her lips a wine-cup of pleasure which, before she had tasted, was dashed to the ground; and what was the meaning of starting her on a voyage which meant only shipwreck, or taking her on a pilgrimage which ended in nothing but a precipice? With these thoughts tormenting her frenzied soul the poor girl resolves

to take her life into her own hands, and either to dash it to pieces by a leap from the cliffs, or else to sleep it away by an overdose of some narcotic. And yet, strange to say, at times she fancies she can distinctly hear a voice within her soul pleading quite piteously with her to give up her resolve, to repent of her life, and to throw herself upon the mercy of Him Who made her, pities her, and wishes her true happiness and salvation. But she will listen to no voice that will not promise to give her back the object of her mad passion, that will not let her embrace the only happiness she can dream of, and will not leave her in possession of it. Accordingly, instead of responding to the call of grace the unfortunate girl rebels against it, swearing she will take her life and face the worst, reckless of whatever consequences.

The next thing we hear of her is that she is found by her maid in the morning, dead in her sleep, and the news goes abroad that the beautiful woman who, in consequence of the forced absence of her husband, had suffered so much that she had been accustomed to take chloral

in order to induce sleep had, by mistake, taken an overdose, which to the regret of all near and dear to her had proved fatal. Time does not permit me to describe all the pathetic things told of her in Society journals, nor can I pretend to speak of the wealth of bloom, in the form of wreaths and crosses and anchors of hope, that smothered the coffin wherein the body of the suicide lay mouldering. Is this a solitary case? No, indeed, and I have described less graphically than I might have done what I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. Is it not simply heart-breaking to think of the number of England's sons and daughters (than whom there are none on earth finer, braver, or nobler), whose lives are being wrecked, hopelessly, irrevocably, because they know no loving arms of a Saviour into which to leap for shelter and forgiveness in the hour of their distress. The poet tells us—

> Well roars the storm to those that hear
> A deeper Voice across the storm.

Alas! the men and women of whom I am speaking know nothing of the

delights of that Voice, because in childhood's day they were never taught the charms of Christ's Person. And so when He comes to them walking over the waste of waters, they with their unclean hearts neither recognise Him nor do they put forth to Him the familiar cry: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters."

Oh! believe me, the world cannot do without Christianity; it is the one personal religion, the one religion of sorrow, the only shelter from the storm of passion, the only harbour for the weather-beaten soul casting about for safe anchorage. Even poor Huxley felt forced to write, "I have been seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, can be kept up." Let the world say if it will that the Christian idea of sin is a bygone superstition, that what is known to us by the word sin when given its worst name is a mistake only, that it is the inevitable product of one who is not actually perfect, but only striving after perfection; let the world try to make out it is as unreasonable to suppose that God blames a man for failing

to reach some recognised standard of moral growth, as it would be for us to find fault with him for not coming up to some ideal standard of physical strength or beauty; let it proclaim to its votaries that what we call iniquity is nothing else but an ugly word for the tokens of growth and health, while remorse, which dogs its steps, is no more to be regarded in the light of punishment for wrong-doing than any other growing pain is to be interpreted as the penalty of lawlessness; let the world, if it will, go on to preach to its devotees that, in the struggle for the survival of the fittest, which is the law of life, there must be, in the moral as in the physical order, those who are weaker as well as those who are stronger, those who are worse as well as those who are better; but that there is no blame attaching to the weakest for going under in the struggle, just as there can be no merit in the fittest surviving; and finally, let the world assert loudly as it will that all is a matter of environment, heredity, temperament, and constitution.

My brethren, if you depart from Christ to listen to these modern hiero-

phants they will teach you that according to the twentieth century gospel there is no place in God's character for anger against lawlessness; nay, that what theologians call remission of sin is "only a kind of formality"; and that what profligates give way to is indeed sure to recoil upon themselves, and to do them moral injury, but that there is in it no personal offence against God Who never takes our acts to be what they are not meant to be; and finally, to assert that man is to be blamed by a just God for doing what he has not been given the strength to resist, is a contradiction in terms.

In one word, the world preaches its own gospel, and now speaks as though it had made the discovery that there are no such things as sins, and no such persons as sinners.

Seeing this is the doctrine that is now being promulgated in drawing-rooms, propagated in club-land, disseminated through reviews, accepted by the Press, and gulped down by so many of the rising generation, is it not time for every Christian Englishman to rise to his feet, and to speak out, with all the force of his being, warning his

countrymen, as he would those fast asleep in a house on fire, to spring away while yet there is time from this would-be "religion of the future," which, according to the *Fortnightly Review*, "following the general tendency of the religion of to-day, will concern itself more and more with this present sublunary, indisputable life of ours, and ever less with what lies beyond the human ken."

Are we, I feel disposed to ask, the legitimate descendants of those brave, strong Christian men who girdled our Island-home with its stately minsters and cathedrals; have we forgotten the names of our Alfred the Great and Edward the Confessor; has St George ceased to be our country's patron; did St Alban, our proto-martyr, die in vain; has the memory of St Augustine and Venerable Bede, of Helen and Ursula, of Winifred and Hilda, and a host of others too numerous to mention, passed away for ever from our national life? Is the example of Thomas of Canterbury, of Cardinal Fisher, of Margaret of Salisbury, or of Chancellor Thomas More less than nothing to us? My brethren, these

men and women, with others, the glory of our race, once helped to make England ; are we, I ask, in our folly, going to unmake it ?

To-day, we need in England neither Empire destroyers nor Empire loiterers, but Empire builders and Empire supporters. The pillars of State, it is said, are giving tokens of weakness. Are we, under these circumstances, to be seen standing at ease when the word of command should be " attention " ? Are we, or are we not, fast becoming a nation of amateurs ? Is it, or is it not true we are losing our energy, playing at work, and relaxing our grip of things ? Are we, I ask, falling off instead of holding on ? Is it true we are disbanding instead of recruiting ; in place of building up are we pulling down — messing, pottering, tinkering at our Empire ? We want more play and less work ; we ask for higher wages and easier toil, for richer food and longer sleep ; we demand the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain ; we feast our bodies and starve our souls ; shirk our duties and yield to our passions ; we neglect prayer and avoid Church ; we ignore God, and

decry His laws; question His message, and deny His rights; we are content with what is bad, saying "it might be worse"; making it each day truer for our enemies to call our England "that land of lean women and smug men," who care for nothing but themselves. In a word, we are suffering from self-centred materialism, which means, sooner or later, England's downfall and ruin. We are trying the impossible, to get on without God.

With our own revered and beloved Prince of Wales, I exclaim: "Wake up, England, wake up!" Gird thy loins, grip thy lamp, push thy way; be strong, be pure, be brave; work and thrive, watch and pray—be on God's side, and hold to thy motto, *Dieu et mon droit.*

Blame me not for speaking out, but as I am a Christian fellow-Englishman, resolved to yield to none in love of God, of King, and of Country, have patience, and bear with me while in all sincerity let us sink to our knees and pray for a blessing on Edward our King, on Queen Alexandra, and on our beloved England.

O God, save Edward VII our King,
And hear us in the day on which we call upon Thee.

Let us Pray.

O God, by Whom kings reign and the princes of the earth exercise their power; O God, Who art the strength of those kingdoms that serve Thee; mercifully hear our prayers, and defend Thy servants, Edward our King, and Queen Alexandra, from all dangers; and grant that their safety may conduce to the peace and welfare of Thy people. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Saint George, our chief Patron,
Saint Augustine, Apostle of the Nation,
Saint Alban, our Proto-martyr,
Saint Edward, dear King and Confessor,
Saint Bede, our venerable Historian,
All ye Saints from this dear land
Who still retain your love of your "Merrie England,"
Pray for us and for our Country.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

Religion 's all or nothing. It's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, Sir—
. . . . . rather stuff
O' the stuff, life of life, and self of self.
I tell you men won't notice. When they do
They'll understand.—ROBERT BROWNING.

The interest which this course of sermons on the sins of Society created when they were first delivered surprised no one more than the preacher himself. If it was difficult to account for it, anyhow, there it was, a fact. Not only were the sermons reported by the Press all over the civilised world, but inquiries, by all sorts and conditions of men, have since been made for them in published form.

To me they have brought a mass of correspondence, which, much to my regret, it has been quite impossible to do more than read through, though much of it claimed closer attention and grateful acknowledgments.

The Press, alike abroad and at home, has commented both favourably and unfavourably on what I said; some

daily papers expressing admiration, some condemnation. Of course there are those who thought my pictures were over-drawn, and those who declared they were under-coloured, and many more who pronounced them to be strictly true to life. It was thought by a section of writers that my strictures should have been directed against the whole social organism and not against some members of it only, and by another section it was felt that what I had preached was gross exaggeration, betraying a pitiful ignorance of the actual state of Society. No possible good, said some of the newspapers, ever came from an onslaught such as mine ; it only entertained frivolous Society which was well pleased at being taken notice of. On the other hand, not a few assured me that nothing but good could result from pointing out the faults and failings of people who had too long flattered themselves they were every bit as good as their neighbours, and had altogether forgotten their duty of setting a good example to others in inferior social positions.

The amount of advice that these discourses have brought me quite beggars

description. When I think of it, I am almost surprised it has not left me a paralytic for the rest of my life. Fortunately, there is a humorous side to most things, and my many correspondents, who thought it very wrong of me not to have devoted my course of sermons to vivisection, woman's rights, vaccination, rabbit-shooting, or horse-racing instead of confining them to the subjects which I actually chose, have proved to me that even those who themselves have no sense of humour may, for all that, provide excellent material for those who have.

One thing is certain, and it is that should I, at any future time, feel called upon to deal with any of the subjects that have been so generously suggested to me, I shall certainly not have to go far in search of books treating of those matters, for I verily believe that by this time I must be in possession of most of the current literature dealing with these subjects.

Psychologically, this Press and letter information has been most interesting, and goes to prove the truth of the saying: *Unusquisque judicat prouti affectus est.*

And here it seems to be my duty to

say that instead of coming, after more time and thought, to the conclusion that I was too sweeping in my description of Fast Society as it is in our midst to-day, I have, on the contrary, arrived at an opposite judgment. It is my deliberate belief, and I am fully persuaded, that my sermons understate what is going on to-day, among some members, not only of the upper classes, but in the middle class, and among working people also.

What tales of agony and woe I might unfold! Why do we close our eyes to it all, hoping it will right itself? I am well satisfied that the real state of things in the social world of England must be well known to most observers of men and manners, only for motives best known to themselves they refuse to acknowledge it; they prefer to conceal what is now wrong, hoping time will set it right; or else they console themselves with the memory of a day gone by when Society was no better, as though we ourselves were justified in being worse because a past generation had been bad. Surely this is scarcely in accordance with the gospel of modern progress.

In a postcript I cannot pretend to do more than to draw attention to a few symptoms of the evils that are eating into the heart of this great social organism called the British Empire, and which are seriously threatening its physical as well as its moral life.

The first and perhaps the worst evil of all which we have to face is the steadily-decreasing birth-rate in this country. When the logic of figures brings home to us the fact that the birth-rate has fallen from 35·4 to 27·2 per cent. in thirty years, and that it is continuing year by year and month by month to fall lower and lower without any hope of a rise, we may well exclaim: "Behold what comes of ignoring God and His laws!"

"Do not let us wrap ourselves up," said Sir James Crichton-Browne, "in racial self-conceit. Do not let us forget the Greek, the Roman, and the Byzantine Empires. The racial struggle for existence is not over and finally decided in our favour. History proves that a dwindling birth-rate is a symptom of national decrepitude, and a high infant mortality is

a prodigious waste of national resources."

I know I shall be told by my optimist countrymen that 10 per 100 of this decline is due to a falling off in illegitimate births. It may be so, but from my point of view this does not improve the situation, because I have reason to believe that the shrinking in the birth-rate is due, not to less crime, but to more cunning. I do not so much regret that the number of births should be less as that the number of crimes should be more. And if we try to console ourselves in the thought that 20 per cent. of this evil may be traced to a decline in the marriage rate, we are still confronted by 70 per 100 yet to be accounted for. Let us face the appalling fact boldly, and acknowledge that nearly 66 per 100 of the fall in England's birth-rate is due to what the American President calls racial-suicide.

The Roman Empire, so historians observe, perished for want of men; what, I ask, is the present want of the British Empire? We want men, and to illustrate what I mean, let me remind you we want more than 4000

Englishmen to replace this number of aliens now serving in our Merchant service, while in most of our other fields of industry and departments of labour, there is the same want felt—the want of men. What will become of the greatest Empire the world has yet seen if our present dearth of men goes on increasing? What will become of us, as a Christian nation, if English parents, instead of exercising their marriage rights in accordance with the Will of their Maker, persist in profaning the sanctity of wedded life by refusing to do their duty to God and country?

To any thoughtful Christian man this crime of racial suicide, with which we stand charged, must seem to be one of the very worst symptoms in the present life of our nation. Seldom, if ever, do a people that has once taken to this vicious practice come to repent of it; on the contrary, it tries to defend, by all manner of specious arguments, its life of turpitude, till at length its moral sense with its physical life lie together, branded with degradation, decrepitude and decay.

Another symptom of our national decadence is our greed of gold. "Make

haste to get rich," is the cry all along the line. Our God is Mammon—we praise, reverence, and worship wealth. "Wealth is that to which the multitude of men pay an instinctive homage It is a homage resulting from an honest, genuine, hearty admiration of wealth for its own sake, such as that pure love which holy men feel for the Maker of all; it is a homage resulting from a profound faith in wealth, from the intimate sentiment of their hearts, that, however a man may look, if he be rich, he differs from all others; if he be rich, he has a gift, a spell, an omnipotence—that with wealth he may do all things."

Hence the rush for quick returns, for dividends, for ready money. Men and women alike tell you "they measure happiness by wealth, and by wealth they measure respectability." And so down some of them drop in prostrate admiration before the Golden Calf, to which they are prepared to offer any sacrifice, even the sacrifice of their pampered bodies, provided only the oblation will secure for them an immediate return of gold.

Speaking on this subject a lady, who,

on a day now fled, was a conspicuous luminary in the social firmament, said to me: "In my day we were frivolous and faithless, but never did we sell ourselves as some of the present generation do for money. In my day it was admiration and adulation that we worshipped, not riches."

And what is the meaning of this greed —what is the explanation of this rush for the flash of gold? Do our people, like the American, worship wealth for its own sake, and seek it for the mere excitement of making it? No, besides liking wealth so much for its own sake, we pursue it as fiercely as we do, because we want pleasures more. There is a positive fever thirst for pleasure. Among married people this craving for excitement is seen quite as much as among *débutantes*. The same complaint is heard everywhere. In the counting-house, in the lawyer's office, in business places, in the still-room, in servants' halls, in factories, and in workshops, there is the same restless anxiety to cry off work, and get to play. Nobody wants "to labour and to wait." And yet there is nothing so ruinous as pleasure. It is a ready-

money business; it gives no credit, but exacts the last farthing, and though it may mean ruin to a whole family, the money must be immediately found, and the debt paid.

Alas! what a revelation has my correspondence during the past three months been to me; what an outpouring of hearts laden with sorrow; what an unfolding of minds tortured with doubts; what an unburdening of consciences stricken with remorse!

And here, let me ask, to what are we to ascribe this greed of gold, this racial suicide, this mad passion for gambling, this fever rush for pleasure, this forgetfulness of right and wrong, this too self-centred materialism that is yearly ruining more human souls than cancer does bodies? Listen to what one of our London Dailies has to say on the subject in relation to my sermons:

"Father Bernard Vaughan is gallantly scourging the Sins of the Smart Set every Sunday morning. We understand that in consequence he is very popular in the Smart Set. He provides them with a fresh thrill. He helps them to recapture their lost

interest in themselves. They rather enjoy spiritual flagellation.

They enjoy Father Vaughan; they like to play at remorse, and they find a faint excitement in trying to hear the voice of conscience. The sound of the word sin in their ears is exotic. To them it is a strange incomprehensible thing. Sin? It is a queer ancient far-off thing. Father Vaughan's knotted lash is sharp, and he wields it sternly, but it does not raise one weal on the delicate flesh of these massaged and manicured Salomes and Phrynes. His scorn is savage, but it does not produce more than a polite smile on these soft faultless faces. His contempt is bitter, but it does not make a single modish harlot blush. They are dimly amused by the excitement of the good man. They are not in the least annoyed. They are, on the contrary, eager to ask him to dinner. What a piquant sensation it would be to serve adultery with the sauce of asceticism.

Father Vaughan says that if King Herod and Herodias and Salome were to arive in Mayfair they would be petted by the Smart Set. The good father, in the innocence of his heart,

underacts the *rôle* of Savauhganrola. Herod and Herodias and Salome have arrived. They are here. We know them. We see them daily. Their names are in the newspapers. They were at Ascot. They are present at the smartest weddings at St George's, Hanover Square. Do we despise them ? Do we boycot them ? Do we cut them ? By no means. We honour and reverence them. We may talk about their bestialities in the privacy of the boudoir and the smoking-room, but in public the theme is discreetly evaded.

The irony of the thing is the fact that the moral callosity of the Smart Sinner is due entirely to the decay of religious belief. The churches have lost their hold upon the educated classes. The modern man and the modern woman do not believe in God, or in Heaven, or in Hell. They have nothing to fear except social ostracism. They listen to Father Vaughan's thunder as the playgoer listens to stage thunder. They think it is only a property man rolling a property cannon ball. They do not fear God. Why should they fear Vaughan ? "

I am much distressed to feel forced

to acknowledge, with the writer of the article here quoted, that "the moral callosity of the Smart Sinner" (and at present our observations refer to Society sinners) is due, if not entirely, at any-rate in great measure to the decay of religious belief. "The modern man and the modern woman do not believe in God, or in Heaven, or in Hell. They have nothing to fear except social ostracism."

Once again I must, in self-defence, repeat what I have so often said, that no one includes all Society in this terrible condemnation. But it is true to say that quite a number of influential people are living in England to-day as though there were no personal God, and as though they themselves had no immortal souls with an eternal destiny before them of weal or woe.

No one acquainted with the system of philosophy, which principally in fluences my thinking countrymen to-day, can fail to be struck by one feature — the negation of a personal God, and of any order of things other than the one of which our senses take cognizance. No philosopher has so profoundly or so widely swayed the modern mind as

Kant, and the very foundation upon which his philosophy (in so far as that philosophy is a living force to-day) rests, is the utter inability of the human intellect to transcend itself—to attain any certain knowledge of what may be outside the very limited range of present experience. God, the soul, immortality, liberty—are these facts, or are they the illusions of a mind fashioning, if not actually creating, the objects of its knowledge? These questions, to the present followers of Kant, die away without the echo of an answer from the realms of reason, and so in the name of reason they reject all belief in these suprasensible realities.

Before religion can hope to gain a hearing, the modern mind must rid itself of this agnostic philosophy. The great problems, on the answer to which depends the moral regeneration of Society, are not directly and immediately religious, they are philosophical.

False philosophical presuppositions underlie nearly all modern thought on religious and scientific questions, and only a return to a sane philosophy will make possible a return to a belief in a personal God and in a personal

soul needing religion to put it into personal relation with God. Further, the Kantian philosophy, which began with the criticism of man's intellectual faculties and found them incapable of reaching beyond the things of sense, has gone on to examine the historical documents on which man's religious faith rested, and finds them also untrustworthy. On all sides we hear it said that the Divine Personality of Jesus Christ is not found in the Synoptic Gospels, and that the dogma has lost its meaning and interest for the present generation. Men are intensely interested in all literature dealing with our Lord's teaching, but not so in articles treating of His Personality.

And so it can be said to-day, "The Churches have lost their hold upon the educated classes. The modern men and women do not believe in God, or in Heaven, or in Hell." They believe just what happens for the moment to suit them, and the articles of their creed, like their articles of dress, change with their environment, or with the social functions in which they happen to find themselves. With the supernatural and the miraculous they

will have nothing to do. "Miracles," they say, "never happen." Accordingly, Christianity has become to them nothing more than a name, a mere badge of respectability. It has ceased to be an influence: it bores them.

I beseech believing parents to teach their little ones to love our Divine Lord, and to train them, for His sake, to be good and kind and sweet. It surely cannot cost mothers very much to heed the invitation: "Suffer little children to come to Me, and forbid them not." Be sure you are never doing your own selves so good a turn as when you are sacrificing a little time in the higher interests of your children.

Then I do implore those who take part in the education of boys in our Protestant public schools to give a little more individual attention to the lads under their charge, teaching them to know and love our Divine Master, above and beyond father and mother, brother, and sister; in a word, to love Him as their Saviour and their God. How many non-Catholic boys I come across to whom elementary Christianity is not familiar as it was

with their fathers a generation ago. Modern thought has robbed men of their religion and given them nothing in exchange. Surely Jesus Christ should be the invisible Head-master in every school calling itself Christian? What will become of the flower, the bloom and beauty of England's youth at the universities if they grow up without having been already soundly and solidly grounded in the doctrine of the Incarnation? Too often we hear it said: "Cambridge is agnostic, and does not know, while Oxford is indifferent and does not care about Christianity." Is this a libel? Is the motto "*Dominus illuminatio mea*," like so much else at Oxford, a relic of the past? Alas, my experience shows that a great many men come forth from the sister universities feeling: "There is nothing true and nothing new, and it's all no matter." And these are to be England's men of light and leading, the future husbands of her daughters, and the fathers of the next generation! Oh, "gather up the fragments" that yet remain of Christianity in this dear, dear land, and let our young men sit down in companies and feed and feast

upon the bread of the strong. It is man's sacred duty and not woman's to give the lead. If men would respect women more, women might try to live up to the reverence paid to them. Alas! though to my thinking there is nothing in the whole wide world physically to compare with a well-bred, a well-set-up, and a well-groomed young Englishman, yet I cannot help confessing that he has much to learn from men of his own standing who are foreigners. Who can escape seeing how far more deferential, polite, and respectful a man abroad is to a woman than is the average English gentleman at home? For God's sake, let each one of my fellow-countrymen remember his future wife and home will be what he himself makes them. Let each one, then, resolve when his marriage day shall arrive and he pledges to his bride his honour and his troth to—

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point to her the starry skies;
Guard her by your truthful words
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true as wives of yore,
And her "yes" once said to you
Shall be yes for evermore.

My appeal is for a return to Christ and to His teaching. Nothing else will ever satisfy a people that once was truly Christian. And especially do I address myself to all those who, in their heart of hearts, are really sad about their soiled lives. How many men and women there are who would give much to make what is wrong right, and who, if they were only brave enough to take the first step, would soon be found leading a procession of followers in the paths of solid Christian virtue. There are thousands within a stone's throw of where I write these words, who, if only they dared to come back, "like little children," to the feet of Christ, would be doing a greater service to their country than if they raised an army for its defence. But till Jesus Christ becomes to them what He was to their forefathers, the Man-God, there will be no driving force to bring them from idleness to industry, from frivolity to seriousness, from sensuality to purity, from scepticism to religion.

Christianity is a personal religion, and none other will regenerate Society. People must recover faith in One Who

loves them inexpressibly, and Whose power is equal to His love; One at Whose word the awful burden of sin is lifted from the guiltiest soul. And these sad and hungry spirits, crying they know not to whom, like infants in the night, to be delivered from their slavery, these men and women, I say, with boundless capacities for the liberty of the children of God, though now enslaved in the tyranny of evil custom, are found where one would least expect them.

The material evolutionist, who would persuade himself that he is nothing but the outcome of "eternal matter," the evolved "lesser ape," would seem to be only logical in living an animal life, following his animal instincts, indulging in the lust of the moment, the whim of the hour, and the fashion of the day; and yet the remorse and sense of degradation from which he cannot escape, and which, at times, is almost more than he can bear, are something more than the voice of the "tribal conscience" to which he would fain reduce morality. Who does not know the man and woman who, in public, will declare that their life is all

happiness, flooded like a bower of roses with perpetual sunshine ; but in private, like reeds under a pelting storm, they break down, and will swear, unless Fortune comes to their relief, they will take their life, for it has become no longer bearable ?

Ask a man if he has found happiness worthy of him, and what mockery is in the question ? In youth he set out on the quest of pleasure ; lord of himself he thought—of the five senses, and of all they held in trust for him—he would " warm both hands before the fire of life," would " go and abound with delights and enjoy good things," and whatsoever his eyes desired he refused them not. And yet who does not know that with him, as with the great king of old, all has proved vanity and vexation of spirit ? He has sought feverishly to slake at the fountain of pleasure a thirst that is not here to be quenched, and his misery has become such that he flies from the thought of it, as if he could escape from his inmost self. We may apply to such a one the grave words of Lucretius—words with a deeper meaning than the writer was conscious of, deeper,

indeed, than was consistent with his philosophy :—

" The man who is sick of home often issues forth from his large mansion, and as suddenly comes back to it, finding, as he does, that he is no better off abroad. He races to his country house, driving his jennets in headlong haste as if hurrying to bring help to a house on fire ; he yawns the moment he has reached the door of his house, or sinks heavily into sleep and seeks forgetfulness, or even, in haste, goes back again to town. In this way each man flies from himself (but self from whom, as you may be sure, he cannot escape, clings to him in his own despite), and hates himself because he is sick and knows not the cause of his malady ; for if he could rightly see into this, relinquishing all else, each man would study to learn the nature of things is the condition for eternity, not for one hour, in which mortals have to pass all the time which remains for them to expect after death."

The Society materialist's discontent and remorse are evidence of something not recognised in his philosophy of

life. "Thou hast made us for Thyself," says St Augustine, "and our heart is restless until it shall rest in Thee." They bear witness to a higher law than the laws of matter and force, that "The wages of sin is death."

If such a one reads these pages, I implore him to look well into his moral experience, into what I would call his soul, and find there the beginnings of faith. To such a one I would say: "If thou didst but know the gift of God," thou, too, wouldst confess with Peter: "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God"; "Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

"Do penance," then I say to you would-be materialists, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand."

And in like manner I would appeal to the Agnostic, who, though he hardly dares to believe in his soul, is yet in trouble about it. His philosophy finds no certain foundation for a belief in God, in freedom and immortality, and nevertheless he is weighed down by the consciousness of sin and a fear

(vague though it be) of some judgment to come when he will have to give " an account of the things done in the body." Let him not attempt to repel these feelings as irrational, let him, on the contrary, see in them rather the protest of the reason he has outraged. It is easy to find plausible arguments against the existence of God and the freedom of man's will, but in his heart the sinner knows and fears. Any fool can be vicious ; it takes a hero to be virtuous, always on God's side. Let him then pray for more and more light till he attain the full truth, the truth that will make him free. Life is fast speeding to its close when God " will bring all things that are done into judgment," when the sophisms with which we now would palliate our guilt will shrivel up before His outraged Truth and Holiness. While it is still day, before the night cometh, " Do penance, repent, believe ye the Gospel." Get right with God.

And lastly, one word for those Catholics who have allowed themselves to be infected by the prevailing worldliness, who have forgotten " what they have heard with their ears and

their fathers told them, the wonderful works of God in their days and in the days of old."

How degenerate must many a Catholic family seem in the eyes of Protestant England! How wanting some of them are in character, how poorly do they bear themselves as Catholics, how little do they seem to prize their grand inheritance! Who can believe that they are the sons and daughters of men and women who felt there was nothing to be proud of but their religion, who would part with anything or everything but their religion, who for their religion suffered and bled and died? I sometimes wonder how their easy-going children can look up at the old family portraits in their dining-rooms, or read the old mottoes of chivalry crossing their coats of arms, or pass into the domestic chapel where their parents prayed, or peruse the old documents which tell of their love of Christ and of their country. Why this boast of heraldry, if it does not make us lift up the feeble knees and stretch forth the drooping hands and call us to action as Catholic English citizens?

We are too much in the world; we want nobody to realise that we are Catholics; in a word, we have ceased to be proud of our religion, we are half-ashamed of it. What are our ambitions? To keep intact the faith committed to the saints, or to throw in our lot with those whose principles and practice give the lie to all we ought to hold most sacred? What again, I ask, are our ambitions? What do we desire for our children? That they should "cut a figure" in the world, or keep themselves unspotted from it as the Apostle bids us? What little care we have of their education, and for the formation of their character. Do we train them to be generous, straight, and brave? to think habitually of whatsoever things are true, modest, just, and holy? or do we fill their young hearts with ideas of fashion, of vanity, of worldliness, and teach them, by our own example, to mind chiefly the fleeting things of time and sense? What sacrifices are we prepared to make to shield them from danger, or to help and strengthen them against the trials they must pass through? What care for their fellows can our own selfishness teach them;

what interest in local affairs does our absenteeism give them; what example to Society must our worldliness set them? What sense of responsibility can they learn from our own frivolous lives; what sense of duty from our idle pursuit of pleasure? We have heard much lately of the gospel of recreation; I want to preach the gospel of work. I ask my countrymen—above all, my Catholic fellow-countrymen—to gird their loins, to get to work, to lead clean, hard, industrious lives; to build character, to realise themselves, to resolve to make the best of themselves, to determine to leave Society somewhat better for their having been in it, and so, when their day of life shall be done and they go hence, having fought the good fight, run their course, and kept the faith, they may receive the crown which the Lord, the Just Judge, will render to them.

"Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation" for England. Let us have done with the sluggard's consolation that we are no worse now than were our fathers before us; let us cease to justify our own wickedness

at home by pointing the finger of scorn to cities abroad; and let us no longer cherish that perilous insular blindness which refuses to see ourselves as others see us. "Let us then be up and doing," and get at "something attempted, something done."

To all true Englishmen, who have at heart the highest interests of their country, and who want to see her daughters as pure as her sons are brave, I address myself. I ask you, my fellow-countrymen, nay, I beseech you, to force yourselves to realise that it is only by the sacrifice of your self-centred tendencies that you can sustain and develop those altruistic virtues that make for the general good of the social organism; that it is only by rising to the full height of your Christian manhood that you can hope to sway your lower natures to the bidding of your will; that it is only by making every woman of your acquaintance nobler for having been in your company that you can contribute to the health of Society in general; and that it is only by respecting the wives and daughters of other men

that you can promise yourselves to hold the affection of those to whom you are pledged till death do you part.

And finally, I venture to remind all who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ to bear in mind that, among a practical people which tests the worth of a religion by its action on daily life, they will do far more for the regeneration and reformation of Society by living the life of the Gospel than by distributing copies of it; that by becoming themselves less frivolous and more industrious, less philosophical and more religious, less controversial and more prayerful, they will be rendering the highest services to God and country.

As for us Catholics, our duty is clear. We belong to the old tradition; we know that we are members of a Church which is as intimately under the Guiding Hand of God to-day as she was in the Apostolic Age; that Pope Pius X is our actual Infallible Teacher in matters of faith and morals, and that so long as we are trying to bring our practice up to the level of our belief, we, too, are making the very

best of ourselves, both for God and country. We have nothing to dread unless it be from so-called liberal Catholics. They, of course, are made use of by our enemies as weapons with which to stab at the heart of the Church; but even in the hands of our foes they are despised as traitors to Him Who said: "He that is not with me is against me." Many of our separated brethren may laugh to scorn our seeming folly in accepting certain doctrines that for us are infallibly true; but what must they think of the so-called Catholic who accepts in theory what he denies in practice? They despise such a one almost as much as we do. Our countrymen admire the man who has the courage of his convictions, who, in matters where living principle is at stake, knows nothing of compromise —they reverence and love a man like our own leading layman, who loses no opportunity of reminding us that: "Everybody who looks about him will find, probably very ready to hand, opportunities of coming forward in public life, and of doing his duty to his God and to his country."

P.S. — Since going to press, my attention has been drawn to an article in *The Times* for October 11th which more than confirms my contention about racial suicide. Coming, as it does, from the pen of Mr Sidney Webb, this article on "Physical Degeneracy or Race Suicide" is of exceptional value. I take the liberty of recapitulating his points, and of citing the last passage of this admirable article.

"1. The decline in the birth-rate is not merely the result of an alteration in the ages of the population, or in the number or proportion of married women, or in the ages of these.

"2. The decline in the birth-rate is not confined to the towns, nor (so far as England and Wales is concerned at least), is it appreciably, if any, greater in the towns than it is in the rural districts.

"3. The decline in the birth-rate is exceptionally marked where the inconvenience of having children is specially felt.

"4. The decline in the birth-rate appears to be specially marked in places inhabited by the servant-keeping class.

"5. The decline in the birth-rate appears to be much greater in those sections of the population which give proofs of thrift and foresight than among the population at large.

"6. The decline in the birth-rate is due to some new cause which was not appreciably operative fifty years ago.

"7. The decline in the birth-rate is principally, if not entirely, the result of deliberate volition in the regulation of the marriage state.

"We may add other evidence. Among the Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom any regulation of the marriage state is strongly forbidden, and has, during recent years, been made the subject of frequent, special animadversion, both privately and from the pulpit. It is significant that Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom in which the birth-rate has not declined; that in Ireland itself it has declined a little in semi-Protestant Belfast, and not at all in Roman Catholic Dublin; and that in the towns of Great Britain the decline is least in Liverpool, Salford, Manchester, and Glasgow—towns in which the proportion of Roman Catholics is consider-

able. Among the principal textile factory towns, the decline is least at Preston, which is the one having the largest proportion of Roman Catholics. Among the different metropolitan boroughs—though we cannot measure with accuracy the fall in the birth-rate —the present rate is highest, and, therefore, in all probability, the fall has been least in those boroughs in which the Irish Roman Catholics (and the Jews who, in this respect, are in the same position) are most numerous. All this is inconsistent with the hypothesis that the decline is due to physical degeneracy, and consistent with that of its being due to deliberate volition. Common report that such deliberate regulation of the marriage state, either with the object of limitation of the family, or (which has the same result), with that of regulating the interval between births, has become widely prevalent during the past quarter of a century — exactly the period of the decline—reaches us from all sides—from doctors and chemists, from the officers of friendly societies and philanthropists working among the poor ; and, most significant of all, from

those who are engaged in the very extensive business to which this new social practice has given rise.

HOW EACH ONE MAY HELP

I AM sometimes asked the question: "How can I, a mere individual, help to reform Society?

Let me, in answer, make the following suggestion:—

Society being made up of families, and families of individuals, is it not clearly the sacred duty of every individual who would check the Sins of Society, first to check sin in himself? Reform thyself — for observe: "The strength of the community depends," as we have been reminded by high authority, "on the number of reliable and virtuous individuals it contains." Be one of this number, and thereby you will be seriously helping to reform Society, giving to it of your best, because living at your best.

What saith the Divine Master in this respect?

"*Thou* shalt love the Lord *thy* God

with *thy* whole heart. . . . This is the first Commandment. And the second is like to it. *Thou* shalt love *thy* neighbour as *thyself*." There is no other Commandment, our Lord reminds us, "greater than these."

How well is this teaching of the Master embodied in the following lines:—

Thou hast *thy* way to go; *thou* hast *thy* day
To live; *thou* hast *thy* need of *thee* to make
In the hearts of others: do *thy* things: yes, *slake*
The world's great thirst for yet another man!
And be *thou* sure of this: no other can
Do for *thee* that appointed *thee* by God.

LIST OF BOOKS FOR CONSULTATION

They are but broken lights of Thee
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Below I give a list of such books as in my judgment I venture to hope may be useful to some of my readers. They may, at any rate, be suggestive and directive.

Religio Viatoris. Cardinal Manning.
Confessio Viatoris. C. Kegan Paul.
On Truth. Mivart.
Origin of Human Reason. Mivart.
Man's Place in the Universe. Wallace.
Four Last Things. B. Thomas More.
Claims of Christianity. W. S. Lilly.
Right and Wrong. W. S. Lilly.
Ancient Religion and Modern Thought. W. S. Lilly.
Letters to a Sceptic. Balmès.
Psychology. M. Maher, S.J.
The Wish to Believe. W. Ward.
Science and Scientists. J. Gerard, S.J.
Science and Romance. J. Gerard, S.J.
Evolutionary Philosophy. J. Gerard, S.J.
Divinity of Christ. Liddon.
Life of Christ. Didon.
Le Devoir. Jules Simon.
Le Prix de la Vie. Ollé Laprune.
Essays on Theism. Ward. Reprinted from the *Dublin Review.*
Christian Philosophy : God. Driscoll. Benziger Bros.

Fundamental Philosophy. Balmès. Sadlier & Co., New York.
Final Causes. Janet. Translation. Clark, Edinburgh.
On Truth. Mivart. Kegan Paul & Trench.
Christian Anthropology. Thein. Benziger Bros.
The Miracles of Unbelief. Clark, Edinburgh.
A Discussion with an Infidel: a review of Dr Buchner's Force and Matter. Art and Book Company.
The Oldest Riddle and the Newest Answer. J. Gerard, S.J. Longmans.
Natural Religion, being vol. i. of Dr Hettinger's *Evidences of Christianity,* with an introduction on "Certainty." H. S. Bowden. Burns & Oates.
Revealed Religion, being vol. ii. of Hettinger's *Evidences.* H. S. Bowden. Burns and Oates.
Theism. Professor Flint.
Antitheism. Professor Flint.
The Westminster Lectures. Edited by F. Aveling, D.D. Sands.
Apologie des Christentums. 3 vols., 8vo, 3rd edit. Freiburg. Herder. (English trans. by Schobel and Clancey. 2nd edit., Pustet.)
Science et Apologétique. A. de Lapparent. Blond, Paris.
Apologie scientifique de la Foi Chrétienne. Nouvelle edition. Poussielgue, Paris.
Die Moderne Biologie und die Entwicklungstheorie. E. Wassmann. Herder, Freiburg. 1905.

Grammar of Assent. Card. Newman. Longmans.
Religion et Critique. Abbé de Broglie. Lecoffre, Paris.
Les Sources de la Croyance en Dieu. Sertillanges. Perrin, Paris.
Moral Philosophie. Cathrein. 2 vols. Herder. Freiburg.
Personality, Human and Divine. J. R. Illingworth. Macmillan.
La Transcendance de Jésus Christ. L. Picard. Plon, Paris.
The Beginnings of the Church. C. Fouard. Trans. Longmans. 6 vols.
Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu. Letouzey, Paris.
The Tradition of Scripture. W. Barry. Longmans.
Le Vatican. G. Goyau. Didot, Paris.
The Study of the Gospels. J. C. Robinson Longmans.
La Méthode Historique et l'ancient Testament. Lagrange. Lecoffre, Paris. (Also English translation.)
Outlines of Dogmatic Theology. 3 vols. S. J. Hunter, S.J. Longmans.
Nature et surnaturel. Bainvel. Beanchesusne, Paris.
Reason and Revelation. Illingworth. Macmillan.

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty at the Edinburgh University Press.

32852

252.2
V 465

VAUGHAN, BERNARD
AUTHOR

Sins of Society
TITLE

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME
	[redacted]
JAN 9 1987	

32852